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WRITING THE PHOTOPLAY

J. BERG ESENWEIN &
ARTHUR LEEDS

A COMPLETE MANUAL OF
INSTRUCTION IN THE NATURE
WRITING AND MARKETING OF
THE MOVING-PICTURE PLAY

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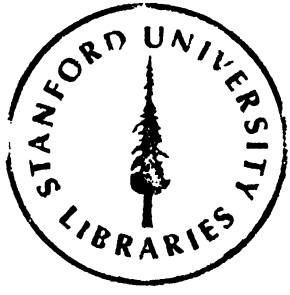
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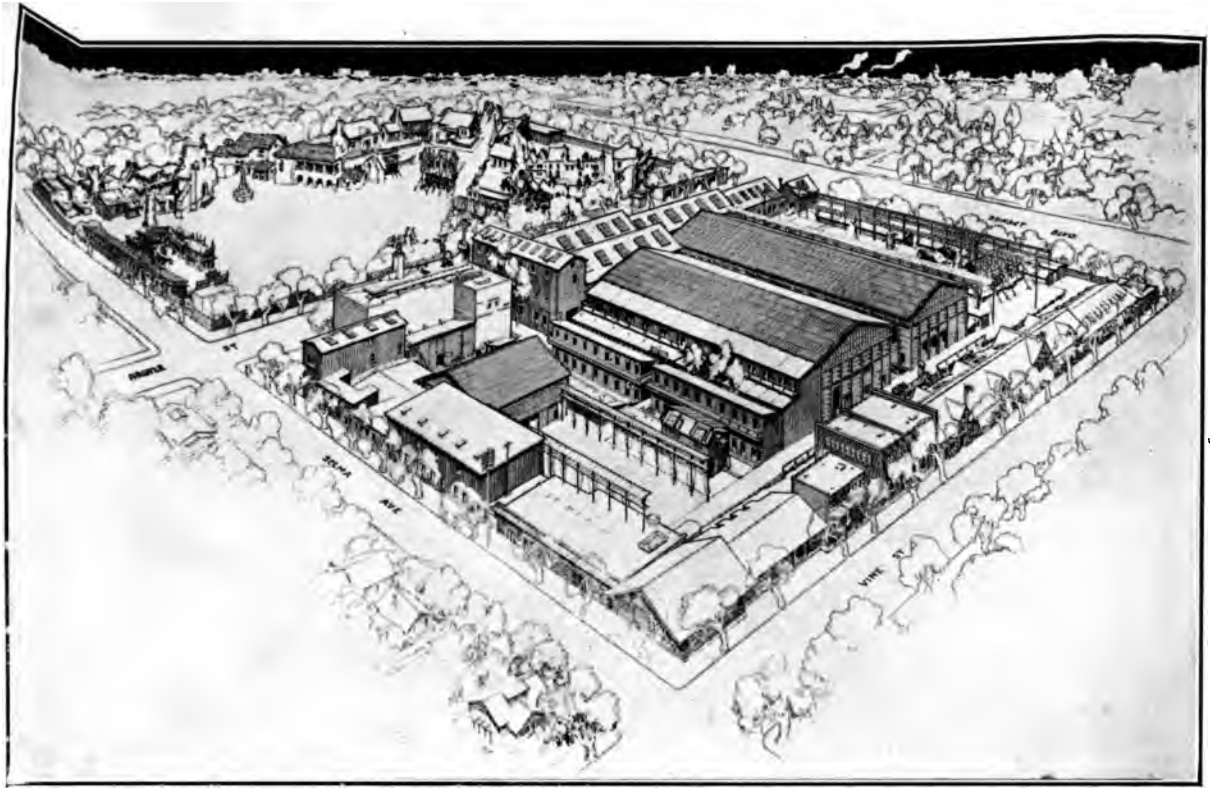

The Lasky Studio of the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, Hollywood, California

Writing the Photoplay

BY

J. BERG ESENWEIN
EDITOR OF "THE WRITER'S MONTHLY"

AND

ARTHUR LEEDS
LATE EDITOR OF SCRIPTS, EDISON STUDIO

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THE HOME CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL
SPRINGFIELD, MASS.
PUBLISHERS

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CHAPTER I

WHAT IS A PHOTOPLAY?

As its title indicates, this book aims to teach the theory and practice of photoplay construction. This we shall attempt by first pointing out its component parts, and then showing how these parts are both constructed and assembled so as to form a strong, well-built, attractive and salable manuscript.

The Photoplay Defined and Differentiated

A photoplay is a story told largely in pantomime by players, whose words are suggested by their actions, assisted by certain descriptive words thrown on the screen, and the whole produced by a moving-picture machine.

It should be no more necessary to say that not all moving-picture productions are photoplays than that not all prose is fiction, yet the distinction must be emphasized. A photoplay is to the program of a moving-picture theatre just what a short-story is to the contents of a popular magazine—it supplies the story-telling or drama element. A few years ago the managers of certain theatres used so to arrange their programs that for four or five days out of every week the pictures they showed would consist entirely of photoplays. On such days their programs corresponded exactly to the contents-page of an all-fiction

magazine—being made up solely to provide entertainment. The all-fiction magazine contains no essays, critical papers, or special articles, for the instruction of the reader, beyond the information and instruction conveyed to him while interestedly perusing the stories. Just so, the all-photoplay program in a picture theatre, at the time of which we speak, was one made up entirely of either "dramatic" [1] or "comedy" subjects. Films classified as "scenic," "educational," "vocational," "industrial," "sporting," and "topical," were not included in such a program.

True, a genuine photoplay may contain scenes and incidents which would almost seem to justify its being included in one of the foregoing classes. One might ask, for instance, why Selig's film, "On the Trail of the Germs," produced about five years

[1] The photoplay has come to have a language of its own, which we must observe even when, as in this case, we lose somewhat in finer word-values. In their lists of releases (photoplays released or made available for public presentation at a specified date), manufacturers usually classify as "comedy" subjects all photoplays which are without any serious dramatic moments or situations. Thus, in the lists of releases published in the various trade journals, what are obviously "comedy-dramas"—some of them, such as certain of the Douglas Fairbanks productions, even bordering on farce—are classed as "dramatic" subjects, and this, apparently, because they are strongly dramatic in certain scenes. Thus, again, genuine farce (as distinguished from "slap-stick" comedy), social comedy, burlesque and extravaganza are all classed under the head of "comedy," just as comedy-drama, tragedy, melodrama, and historical plays are classed as "dramatic." These two broad classifications will be used throughout this work except where finer distinctions are needed in order to treat varieties of subjects. The regular spoken play naturally invites these distinctions more than does the photoplay, at least at present. In preparing your manuscript, however, you will be taught to follow the accepted form among photoplaywrights and. in writing the synopsis, after the title, specify the class of subject, as "dramatic photoplay," "farce," "comedy-drama," "historical *drama,*" "society drama," etc.

ago, was classified as "educational," while Edison's "The Red Cross Seal" and "The Awakening of John Bond" (both of which were produced at the instance of the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, and had to do with the fight waged by that society against the disease in the cities), were listed as "dramatic" films or photoplays. Anyone who saw all three of the films, however, would recognize that the Selig picture, while in every respect a subject of great human interest, was strictly educational, and employed the thread of a story not as a dramatic entertainment, but merely to furnish a connecting link for the scenes which illustrated the methods of curing the disease after a patient is discovered to be infected. The Edison pictures, on the other hand, were real dramas, with well-constructed plots and abundant dramatic interest, even while, as the advertising in the trade papers announced, the principal object of the pictures was "to disseminate information as to what becomes of the money that is received from the sale of Red Cross stamps at holiday time." So we see that the distinction lies in the amount of plot or story-thread which each carries, and that a mere series of connected pictures without a plot running through it obviously cannot be called a photoplay any more than a series of tableaus on the stage could be accurately called a play.

Therefore, learn to think of a photoplay as being a story prepared for pantomimic development before the camera; a story told in *action,* with inserted descriptive matter where the thought might be obscure

without its help; a story told in one or more reels, each reel containing from twenty-five to fifty scenes.

The spectator at a photoplay entertainment must be able promptly and easily to discover who your characters are, what kind of people they are, what they plan to do, how they succeed or fail, and, in fact, must "get" the whole story entirely from what he sees the actors in the picture *do,* with the slight assistance of a few explanatory leaders, or sub-titles, and, perhaps, such inserts as a letter, a newspaper cutting, a telegram, or some such device, flashed for a moment on the screen. The more perfect the photoplay, the less the need for all such explanatory material, as is the case in perfect pantomime. This, of course, is not to insist upon the utter absence of all written and printed material thrown on the screen—a question which will be discussed in a later chapter. It is enough now to emphasize this important point: Dialogue and description are for the fiction writer; the photoplaywright depends upon his ability to *think* and *write* in action, for the postures, grouping, gestures, movements and facial expressions of the characters must be shown in action, and not described as in prose fiction.

Action is the most important word in the vocabulary of the photoplaywright. To be able to see in fancy his thoughts transformed into action is to have gained one goal for which every photoplay writer strives.

CHAPTER II

WHO CAN WRITE PHOTOPLAYS?

In almost everything that has been written up to the present time concerning the technique of photoplay writing, considerable stress has been laid on the statement that, notwithstanding preceding success in their regular field, many authors of popular fiction have either failed altogether in the production of acceptable photoplays or have had almost as many rejections as, if not more than, the average novice in short-story writing. That there is much truth in this cannot be denied; but that a trained and inventive fiction writer —particularly a writer of plot- or action-stories—after having once learned the *mechanics* of photoplay construction, should fail of success in photoplay writing is, obviously, not at all necessary. A discussion of this point should help to impress on the student just what sort of preparation will be of the greatest assistance to him in the work he is taking up.

1. Experience in Fiction Writing Valuable to the Photoplaywright

Let us consider the case of a man born with a talent and love for music. As he grows up, he learns to play upon the violin—learns as hundreds have done, by first taking up the most simple exercises and con-

stantly working up until he becomes more proficient. As in all other occupations, practice eventually brings skill, and he at last becomes a master of the violin. He may have been born a genius—it has always been in him to become the exceptional performer upon the instrument of his choice. Nevertheless, the hard work was necessary, as that maker of epigrams saw when he said that genius was an infinite capacity for taking pains.

To carry the simple illustration a step further: geniuses are few, so it is certain that our artist has become a master of the violin because he is a man who, loving his work and putting his whole soul into it, daily improved in technique and quality by intelligent labor. If he is a concert performer, he feels his art becoming more perfect with each new recital. He has learned *how* to play, and now there remains nothing but the necessity for keeping constantly—note the expressive phrase—in practice, and improving the quality and style of his playing.

Let us suppose, now, that this musical artist is offered an exceptionally good salary to appear in vaudeville with another musician, who performs equally well upon two or three, or even more, very different instruments. He accepts the offer; he and his partner "open" in the act; and, after a week or two, in order to "build up" the act as well as to become capable of playing another kind of instrument, he decides to take up the study of the cornet. The violin and cornet are, of course, widely different in *construction*, and they produce very different effects.

Besides, the methods of producing those effects are totally unlike, since one is drawn from the violin with the aid of trained hands and fingers, while the other is produced by the skillful operation of the human lips, tongue and lungs, with only minor assistance from the fingers. Yet the tones of these two instruments may be equally harmonious and pleasing when each is skillfully played. So, in the course of time, the violinist becomes almost, if not quite, as accomplished a player upon the cornet as he is upon the instrument whose study first engrossed him.

And now a question—one which certainly should not admit of much difference of opinions in the answering: Of two men, both possessed of a natural talent and love for music, which would be likely first to learn to play upon the cornet correctly and with pleasing expression—the man who had previously learned the technique of violin playing, together with the meaning and value of musical terms, or the one who, without any knowledge of music or of how to perform, should suddenly determine to learn to play a given instrument?

2. Photoplay Writing Requires a Separate Training

Apply the same reasoning to the question of who should *become* the most successful photoplaywright—the trained and experienced fiction writer, or the ordinarily intelligent and imaginative follower of some other vocation, who is suddenly struck by the idea that he could, and filled with the determination that he will,

write a photoplay. We accentuate the word *become* in order to emphasize the fact that even the professional writer *must* learn the *technique* of photoplay construction before he can hope to produce a script that will not only be accepted by a film manufacturing company for production, but will be produced exactly as he has written it, *without the need of drastic revision or rewriting.* This, however, is very rare today.

This last point is important. While, as we have said, it is improbable that an experienced fiction writer would fail in the field of photoplay writing once he had learned to put the plot together in proper form and had mastered a knowledge of the limitations of the moving-picture stage, it is also just as unlikely that the most famous writer living could legitimately sell a photoplay that was essentially faulty in construction and absolutely lacking in screen quality. If the idea were a good one and the writer were to submit it to the producing company under his own name, the chance is that the company would accept it, and, after using his idea to construct the photoplay in proper form, produce and even feature it—on account of the big name won in the field of fiction writing. If, on the other hand, he should submit it under a pen name it is possible that, provided the plot, or even the fundamental idea, proved to be exceptionally good, he might be offered a moderate sum for the plot or for the idea alone, to be worked up and produced as the director thought best. In making him the offer, the company would probably explain quite frankly that the script was not suitably constructed; that it would require

Prodı cing a Big Scene in the Selig Yard: See Cameras on the Right

Film-Drying Room in a Film Factory. The Films are Rolled Around the Racks which are Suspended from the Ceiling and in the Hands of the Operators. Moist Warm Air is Introduced through the Large Pipes

rewriting in the studio; but that the idea was worth the amount offered. Here, then, is one point upon which the novice may congratulate himself: he, as an untrained writer of photoplays, is not alone in having to learn the secret of what will suit the screen, for until the famous author learns that secret, he, too, is an untrained writer—of photoplays, and his "prices" will suffer accordingly.

Now, however, after both have acquired this knowledge of screen requirements, the trained fiction writer and the untrained photoplay writer cease to be on common ground. The writer of novels and short-stories has the advantage of years of—training, is the best word, meaning, in the present instance, both experience and special education. He has a tutored imagination; he has the plot-habit; he has an eye trained to picture dramatic situations; he sees the possibilities for a strong, appealing story in an incident in everyday life that to ninety-nine other people would be merely an incident seen for a moment and in a moment forgotten; he has at his command a dozen different ways of assisting himself to discover plot-germs for his stories—he is, in short, a workman knowing exactly what to do with the tools already in his possession, and when he acquires new tools he can, after some practise, use them with equal proficiency and skill. Furthermore, there can be no doubt that, once each has mastered the working rules of photoplay construction, the chances for quick and continued success are quite evidently in favor of the trained fiction writer—notwithstanding the fact that one man

in a thousand without any previous knowledge of writing may become extremely successful.

3. What Chance Has the Novice?

Should the foregoing fact discourage the novice who has not had this previous literary training? The answer is, emphatically, YES! It should, it ought to—*unless* (and this is the secret of it all), unless he has ideas, and is the kind of novice who vows with every grain of determination in his make-up that he will soon cease to be a mere amateur, and will be recognized as one of the successful ones. Remember, every writer was once a beginner.

The reader may think, having read this much, that undue stress is laid upon the question of the previously successful writer and the ambitious but inexperienced amateur; it is this very insistence on the comparison, however, that should cause the earnest and determined aspirant to photoplaywright success to analyze more thoroughly the difference, and profit by a knowledge of how he may quickly advance himself to the position where the previously successful author will have little or no advantage over him.

Almost all who have had anything to say upon the subject of writing for moving pictures, but especially the writers of the advertising copy for most of the instruction upon the subject, have declared that correspondence "schools" that offer "fake" courses of there is "no experience or literary knowledge necessary" in order to become successful in the photoplay-

writing field. One concern even advertises that the student "can learn this business in from ten to thirty days." If by this is meant that the mere correct form of putting the work on paper with the aid of the typewriter—the mechanical arrangement of synopsis, cast, and scenario or continuity—can be picked up in that many days, there is hardly room to dispute the claim. That, however, is not quite "learning the business." No previous "literary training" *is* necessary, if by that is meant the mastery of English prose writing, or the actual technique of short-story construction or novel writing. We shall see, however, that the photoplaywright who wishes to succeed in more than one, two, or three flash-in-the-pan instances must really submit to a course of training, whether self-conducted or under competent instruction, and the more he knows of fictional and dramatic art the easier is his new work likely to be.

Nevertheless, there is a real sense in which the statement that no literary training is required by the student of photoplay writing is true. Provided he is gifted with an imaginative mind and the native ability to *see* how an idea or a plot-germ would evolve itself into a climacteric and coherent story, and provided he has the dramatic sense, he can actually learn the rules of construction and produce salable photoplays even if he has by no means the literary ability to write a salable short-story. But he *must* be a person of ideas —no book and no instruction can supply that lack.

We have gone so far as deliberately to try to discourage anyone who is so foolish and so undeserving

as to enter the field of photoplay writing without the fullest intention of doing his best to win for himself the very highest position in that field to which his talent and ability to work can advance him; and we have no apologies to offer. Few who have not followed the progress of the moving-picture industry realize the enormous changes that have taken place in the last four or five years. This is especially true of the branch of the business having to do with the preparation of the script. To those who have been in constant touch with the work, it seems only yesterday that the professional photoplay writer, outside of the producing plants, was an unknown factor. At last came the time when the manufacturers started to advertise for ideas on which to build their plays. "Ten to one-hundred dollars paid for motion picture plays," these advertisements read. They were alluring enough even to the man who already had a steady position in another line of work. They told him how he could add from "ten to one-hundred dollars" a month to his regular income. At least, they *seemed* to promise that, especially when coupled with the assurance that "no previous literary training" was required. These advertisements looked attractive, also, to the man whose income was not regular. Small wonder that within a few months' time scores, hundreds, rushed blindly into a field where even writers of established reputation would have failed—and did fail—without preliminary technical training. Even those who succeeded in getting their efforts accepted by the producers found that the check was more likely

to be for ten dollars than for any amount in excess of that.

4. Advance in Requirements

The real change has come within the past ten or twelve months. A sort of weeding process has been carried on by the various manufacturers, and as a result they recognize certain writers as being capable of supplying them, at more or less regular intervals, with the kind of scripts they want, quite as certain magazine editors have lists of story-writers to whom they look for the bulk of their fiction. Gradually this list of trained and capable, and consequently successful, writers for the screen is growing larger, for daily some new writer is demonstrating that the freshness, brightness, and ingenuity of his ideas warrant the editor's putting him on the list of those from whom good material may be expected.

5. The Demand for Photoplays

Is there not, therefore, it may be asked, a probability of the field's becoming overcrowded?

Hardly. The best proof of the opportunity that is held out to the capable outside writer, new or old, is that the staff-writers, whose duty it *should be* to make adaptations of plays and novels and write the scenario, or continuity, for stories bought from free-lance writers in synopsis form, are kept pretty busy writing so-called "original stories" for certain stars, or stories that may be "done" in certain parts of the country at

a particular season of the year. If enough thoroughly good stories could be purchased on the outside, staff writers would never be called upon to write stories to order; only what might be called "inspired" stories would be accepted from them. Furthermore, if plenty of good, original stories, written directly for screen presentation, could be purchased by the editors, the practice of making screen adaptations of popular novels and stage plays would be cut down by more than half.

"Suppose that the staff writer suddenly gets the 'flash'—the inspiration needed to write a Western story with a plot that is infinitely bigger and more dramatic than anything that he has done in a great many months. Thinking it over, he gradually becomes brimful of the theme and its plot-possibilities. He wants to feed the paper into his trusty typewriter and start pounding out the scenario before a single bit of the suddenly inspired plot can get away from him. But he cannot; his company does not make Western stories; nor does it permit its staff writers to sell their work to other firms. Even if it did, he is far too busy to give the time to the writing of a story not intended for the use of his own particular studio.

"So the inspired story has to be laid aside, possibly to be worked upon some time in the future, when he has severed his connection with that company and, by choice or of necessity, become a free-lance writer again. Instead of writing that story he sits down and writes another society drama, after cudgeling his brain *for some time in* an effort to think up a plot that is, at

least, different enough from the one he wrote last week to insure its 'getting by' the scenario editor, the director and 'the boss.' And that is just the point: Although many of these plots do 'get by' the powers that be (or the staff writer would not be holding his job), the photoplay-loving public knows only too well that there is a lamentably close relationship between 'A Wall Street Romance,' shown at the Novelty Theatre last night, and 'Love and Business,' produced by the same company and 'featured' at the same theatre three weeks ago. Therefore the constant demand in nine out of every ten studios for good material from outside writers. Since the writer of photoplay plots must write action-stories constantly, and since, as has been said, the staff writers are just as apt to run dry of new plots as are any other writers, it follows that there must be a market at all times for the really original and highly interesting story, no matter by whom written. If the big photoplay producing companies are to remain in business, if their various stars are to be kept working, and their rate of production up to schedule, there must continue to be a fairly steady flow of good, new stories into the scenario department." [1]

No, the field is not overcrowded—with *capable* writers; nor is it likely to be. With incapable amateurs it undoubtedly is. Every walk of life has contributed its share to the thousands who are *trying* to write photoplays. Hundreds fail because they are

[1] "What Chance Has the 'Outside' Writer?" by Arthur Leeds, *Moving Picture Stories*, October 5, 1917.

both illiterate and totally unfitted for the work. Hundreds more struggle on without a sufficient knowledge of dramatic values and plot building, not knowing precisely what can and what can not be presented successfully in the silent drama. Lacking this knowledge, it is impossible to succeed. But the great majority of the ones who fail, and who, otherwise, would almost certainly have succeeded sooner or later, owe their failure to their inability to hit upon and develop original, ingenious and dramatic or truly humorous plots and plot-situations. Many a man of brains and of excellent education who in any other calling might easily make his mark, finds himself totally unable to win success in short-story writing and photoplay writing simply because, not having an imaginative or (in the literary sense) creative mind, he neglects the thousand-and-one opportunities to stock that unimaginative mind with ideas furnished wholesale by the life he sees about him every day, or by available books of reference, magazines and daily papers; and, last, but far from least in importance, the pictured stories seen on the screen.

CHAPTER III

PHOTOPLAY TERMS

Since it is the purpose of this volume to place in your hands every tool of the trade and every bit of information that may possibly be of assistance in winning the favor of both the manuscript editor and the director, we must now give the meaning of the technical terms used in photoplay work. After thoroughly familiarizing yourself with these expressions and what they mean, you will still have to bear in mind the limitations of the photoplay stage (see Chapter XIII). A lack of knowledge of the latter is directly responsible for more rejected scripts than almost any other one defect. Do not write blindly. Do not "take a chance" of getting your material into proper shape. Master the little details of the work, and thus give yourself the chance to compete on even terms with those who successfully write the pictured drama.

It is important to note that each term given is defined in its relation to the photoplay, and not according to its usual or dictionary meaning. All terms are explained in detail as the book progresses. (See *Table of Contents.*)

BUST: A very close view of some object necessary to the understanding of the picture; as, a watch, a miniature, a jewel. A bust picture is usually taken before some dark background, and does not embody

any specific action, but merely gives a close view of the important object.

CAMERA: The device with which the pictures are taken. The operator of the camera is called, in moving-picture work, "the cameraman." He is, of course, an expert photographer; and, though "camera" as used here means the moving-picture camera, there is always on hand a regular plate-camera for ordinary exposures. This is frequently used for taking "stills," or photographs of certain striking situations in the scenes, from which are made half-tone cuts for the magazines and trade-paper illustrations, and used in designing the large and small lithographed posters used by the exhibitors.

CAMERAMAN: See *Camera.*

CAST: The characters taking individual, and not merely mass, parts in a photoplay.

CAST OF CHARACTERS: The list of characters prepared as a part of the photoplay script for the use of the director or producer. It is customary to make this cast of characters full enough to outline eccentricities and individualities of character, together with brief suggestions for costume.

CLOSE UP: The enlarged portion of a scene, introduced at a point in the action where it is necessary to show some action or facial expression that would perhaps not be understandable at the regular range used for the main portion of that scene. It is employed, as *is the* bust, to enlarge figures on the screen. Like the

bust, it is also designated by its own number in the continuity of scenes of a photoplay script.

CONTINUITY: See *Scenario.*

CUT-BACK: A return to a previously shown scene so as to keep the thread of the action clear.

CUT-IN, OR CUT-IN LEADER: A sub-title which cuts into or breaks the action of a scene instead of appearing before the scene opens. Cut-ins are therefore the sub-titles giving the words spoken by one or more of the characters in a scene. They constitute the "dialogue" of the photoplay.

CUTTING: It happens not infrequently that from 5,500 to 7,000 feet (or even more, if the director is inclined to be wasteful) of negative film is exposed, or used up, in taking the scenes intended for a five-part (5,000-foot) "feature." In every case, a certain amount of film in excess of what is actually needed is inevitably exposed in the photographing of the complete picture. In the "cutting room" of the studio the director "assembles" his picture—pieces together the different scenes, sub-titles, and inserts, and "cuts" portions varying from a few inches to many feet in length when such portions, if retained, would be regarded as "padding," or superfluous footage.

DIAPHRAGM: A term applying to a portion of the camera apparatus, and also applied to the process of causing one scene to disappear, or another to appear. Like the "fade out" and "fade in," the "diaphragm out" and "diaphragm in" are descriptive terms, but having a different purpose. While the "fade out" or

the "fade in" separate two parts of a scene, and bring in between them the thing thought of or spoken of, the "diaphragm out" and the "diaphragm in" (both usually placed in the script on a separate line) serve the purpose of covering a supposed lapse of time in the action, where a leader is not needed. (More fully explained in text.)

DIRECTOR: Sometimes called the Producer. The man who plans and directs the building and setting of all scenes in the production of the picture, as well as casting the actors and actresses for the various parts, pointing out, in a general way, what costuming and make-up are required, and directing their acting and stage "business" during the taking of scenes. "Producer" more properly is the term applied to the manufacturer or manufacturing company.

DOING A PICTURE: To "do" a picture is to produce it in film form. To say that a picture has been "done" in five reels is simply to state that the production has required approximately five thousand feet of film.

DOUBLE EXPOSURE: Same as super-imposure. The practice of exposing the same negative film twice, used extensively in producing "vision" effects, "ghosts," etc., as well as in photographing scenes where one of the players is cast in a "double role," as of twin sisters or brothers, as is more fully explained in the text.

EDITOR: The person who receives, examines, and passes on your photoplay. He decides as to the merits of your story, after which, if he accepts it, it is turned over by him to the director.

EPISODE: See *Serial.*

EXTRAS, OR EXTRA PEOPLE: Supernumeraries, either male or female, who "dress" or "fill in" certain scenes, or who may even be given small parts, or "bits." "Extras" are frequently used as soldiers, cowboys, pedestrians, saloon loungers, guests at a ball, or in other similar capacities.

FADE IN: When the screen is dark, and a picture comes up gradually until it is clear, this is called a fade in.

FADE OUT: When the opposite from the fade in occurs, the scene dying away until the screen is blank, this opposite term is used. These two terms are employed in the photoplay manuscript for the purpose of indicating that some character is thinking of, or telling another about, something that has already happened, or that is prophetically expected to happen. The character is seen thinking, or talking, then there comes a fade out, and then a fade in, and the scene that comes up is what he tells of or is thinking about. This again fades out, and the fade in brings back the original scene with the character thinking or talking; but each of the three scenes used has its own consecutive scene-number in the manuscript. The fade out may also be used to end a scene, or be used at the close of the photoplay.

FEATURE: See *Reel.*

FILM: The strip of translucent material, resembling celluloid, upon which the scene is recorded; a series of pictures one inch wide and three-fourths of an inch

in height, taken at the rate of approximately sixteen a second, and sixteen pictures to one foot of film. These small pictures are technically termed "frames."

FOOTAGE: The amount of film consumed in the making of an individual scene, insert, or the entire picture.

FRAME: See *Film*.

IDEA: An incident, or a situation, that suggests a plot; in other words, the plot "germ."

INSERT: Anything introduced into the film to aid in telling the story or to explain a point of the plot. "Leaders" are also inserts; but, as generally used, inserts refers to letters, telegrams, newspaper paragraphs or personals, or any matter other than cut-ins, or dialogue, inserted into the film during the progress of a scene, thus becoming practically a part of that scene.

INTERPOSE: A term used to indicate the process by which a scene merges into the next, one dying as the other comes up, so that there is no blank screen between them, as in the case of the fade out and fade in. As in the dissolving views of a stereopticon, the scenes merge one into the other. This device is used for the same purpose as the fade out and fade in, but, being more difficult to accomplish, from the camera standpoint, is used only rarely.

LEADER: A sub-title used before a scene to assist the spectator in getting a clear idea of what the picture is to portray.

LOCATION: When the setting for an action is out

of doors, and takes advantage of some natural environment, such as the front of a house, a barn, or a lane, or a lake, it is called a "location." So, while any environment for action is broadly a "setting," one usually refers to an interior setting as a "set" and an exterior setting as a "location."

MULTIPLE REEL: See *Reel.*

NEGATIVE: The original emulsated film used in the camera when the actions of the participants in the photoplay are recorded.

PLOT: The original idea worked into a compact number of scenes and individual situations, all of which in a series carry out the general idea. Sometimes this "plot" is referred to as the "skeleton" of the photoplay. "In its simplest, broadest aspect, plot is the scheme, plan, argument or action of the story." [1] Henry Albert Phillips calls it "the 'working plan' used by the building author." [2]

POSITIVES: The copies printed from the negative. These positives bear the same relation to the negative as "prints" do to a photographic plate.

PRINTS: The "copies" or "positives." The profit to the manufacturer lies, of course, in selling as many prints as possible to the exchange managers of the world.

PRODUCER: See *Director.*

[1] J. Berg Esenwein, *Writing the Short-Story.*

[2] *The Plot of the Short Story.* See also our later discussion of the nature of Plot.

REEL: A full reel of film contains, approximately, one thousand feet. Sometimes two pictures of five hundred feet each, or of different lengths, may constitute a full reel, and it is then termed a "split reel." If a photoplay is produced in two or more reels, it is put on the market as a "two-reel" or a "——-reel" subject and becomes a "multiple-reel" subject. The term "feature" is usually applied to a picture of five parts and upward. When referring to a multiple-reel play, photoplaywrights now favor the use of the word "part" instead of "reel" and say "two-part," or "three-part" story or play. Incidentally, it is well to use "picture" in place of "film" as much as convenient. Earnest workers in the photoplay-writing profession are anxious to eliminate the old atmosphere of cheapness.

REGISTER: To register an effect is to "show" it to the spectators in a way which cannot be mistaken. It is sometimes said that an effect, a bit of "business," or an emotion which an actor is endeavoring to portray, "will not register," meaning that it will not be understood by the audience in the way intended by the director. Very often a lighting effect does not "register" as it was thought it would. Again, an actor may wish to "register" disgust or hatred, and yet he may convey the idea that he is portraying only fear. The word covers various meanings. In writing your story in action (in the scenario or continuity), if a character is hiding behind a curtain, watching an exhibition of cowardice in another character, instead of *saying "Tom* shows by his actions that he considers

Jack an arrant coward," thereby using twelve words, you may write, "Tom registers disgust at Jack's cowardice," which uses only six words; but do not use this technical term too frequently in this manner.

RELEASE: Each producing company "releases" or places on the market a certain number of films every month. Each of these films, therefore, is termed "a release." The "release date" is the day upon which copies of the film are given out to different exhibitors, to be shown to the public for the first time.

SCENARIO: Correctly applied only to that part of the photoplay manuscript which describes the development of the plot, scene by scene and situation by situation; the complete story is swiftly *outlined* in the synopsis, but in the scenario it is told—that is, worked out—in action. The continuity of action; often called "the continuity."

SCENE: A scene is so much of the action of a photoplay as is taken in one place at one time without stopping the camera. The instant that there is need to stop the camera, to change grouping, break the progress of the action, introduce or take away characters, or change costumes, that scene is terminated, and with the new start a new scene is begun.

SCENE-PLOT: That part of the photoplay script which lists the scenes and shows the producer at a glance exactly what different sets are required to stage the picture, and how many different scenes may be done in each sepearate set.

SCRIPT: The typewritten copy of the completed

photoplay. A complete script is composed of three parts: Synopsis, Cast of Characters, and Scenario, or Continuity—and sometimes a fourth part, called the Scene-Plot.

SERIAL: A photoplay serial, as the name implies, is a film totaling, say, 30,000 feet in length, and divided into fifteen "episodes," each episode being made up of two reels, or parts—2,000 feet of film. The production covers one long, continued story, each episode planned to end with a thrilling climax, with a "To be continued in our next," so to speak, tail-piece. The climax comes only at the end of each episode (as the two parts released each week, taken in conjunction, are termed). Incidentally, it should be borne in mind that, in all up-to-date picture theatres, two projecting machines are employed, so that no "break" occurs in the showing of any picture. For this reason, "feature" subjects do not necessarily have any special climax at the end of each reel, and, to repeat, serial photoplays have the grand, forward-looking climax only at the end of each episode.

SET: When a room, hotel lobby, or other interior setting is required, it is usually built in the studio, or in the open air near by, and is called a "set."

SETTING: The setting is the scenic environment of the action. Whether indoors or out, the surroundings, properties, furniture, buildings, and, in short, all that comes within the view of the camera, is the "setting" for that particular scene.

SITUATION: A state of affairs in which certain

characters sustain such relations to each other that an important change might and almost must grow out of the relationship. In other words, a "situation" is a state of affairs full of dramatic possibilities. When a single character is confronted by the necessity for an important decision, whether of morals or of physical action, we also have a "situation."

SPLIT REEL: See *Reel.*

STAGE: The actual photoplay stage is that space within the range of the camera in which the action of that given scene will be apparent. In an interior setting it may be the space between the camera and the walls of the set, to the full extent of the camera-range, in which radius a host of people may be used; or, in the case of action where intense emotion must be made clearly apparent, the stage may be only a space beginning at a point from six to eleven feet from the camera lens, and only as wide as the radius of the camera-angle at that distance. Actually, the stage is a variable area, within the camera-range, in the scope of which the required action will be comprehended.

STOCK PEOPLE: The regular members of the stock company employed by the manufacturer, who draw a stipulated weekly salary, even though not acting in a picture every working day.

STUDIO: That part of the producing plant where the pictures are taken. In its broadest sense, "studio" is often used as meaning the entire manufacturing plant; but such a plant contains, besides the "studio," the lighting plant, carpenter shop, scene dock, property

room, developing room, drying room, joining or assembling room, wardrobe room, paint bridge and scene-painting department, dressing rooms, offices, etc.

SUBJECT: Another term for the play. According to its nature, a picture is known as a "comedy subject," "dramatic subject," and so on.

SUB-TITLE: See *Leader.*

SUPER-IMPOSURE: See *Double Exposure.*

TINTING: Such effects as moonlight, artificial light in a room, firelight, etc., are gained largely by dyeing, or tinting, the positive film in various colors. Tinting is also frequently resorted to for no other reason than to enhance the beauty of the scene, as when sunset scenes are tinted in one of half a dozen suitable tones, or when exteriors are dyed in some shade of brown or green.

TITLE: The name of the story. A very important element, since it is really an advertisement to draw attention to the photoplay, as well as an announcement telling what it is about. "A good title is apt, specific, attractive, new and short." [1]

VISION: The showing of a small scene within a larger scene, as in the case of a lover seated, thinking of his sweetheart, and a vision of the object of his thought appearing in a corner of the scene, and disappearing as he smiles. Visions are resorted to usually to indicate the thought of a character, and should be used only sparingly, if at all.

[1] Charles Raymond Barrett, *Short Story Writing.*

CHAPTER IV

THE PHOTOPLAY SCRIPT: ITS COMPONENT PARTS

We know what a photoplay is; now what are the component parts of a photoplay script?

Simply because the word "scenario" has been so long used loosely as a name for the full written outline or story of the photoplay, it has come to mean the entire manuscript—or photoplay script, as we prefer to call it—completed and ready to be submitted to the editor. Accurately, however (see the preceding chapter, Photoplay Terms), the "scenario" is only one of the three or four distinct parts of a photoplay script, as will be developed in full presently. "The Photoplaywright," a department conducted by Mr. Epes Winthrop Sargent in *The Moving Picture World,* was at first called "The Scenario Writer;" however, Mr. Sargent, like most writers and editors, has abandoned the use of the word "scenario" as applied to the complete script. "Scenario" is the name now properly given to the continuity of scenes, or "the continuity," as many are calling it in these days of more precise nomenclature. Furthermore, various trade publications are now urging writers and all others interested in the work to substitute the word "photoplay" for "scenario," as being more comprehensive and exact when applied to the complete manuscript. In strict

accuracy, however, even "photoplay" is not a sufficiently explicit term when applied to the manuscript only, while either "photoplay manuscript" or "photoplay script" is; for, as all writers may learn to their cost, the "script" is not always destined to become a "play." To some, however, this distinction may seem like splitting a hair nicely between its north and northwest corners. At all events, the "photoplay script" is an exact and descriptive term and may well be used by all interested.

What is of fundamental technical importance in a novel, a short-story, or a play? The story itself—the plot. And so also it is in the photoplay; only, and the reasons must be obvious, its importance in the photoplay is even greater. Without the plot, the writer's script will remain forever a script, a mere piece of hand- or typewriting; it will never be transformed by the magic wand of the director into a film picture. Remember always that the photoplay is nothing but a series of scenes *in action* which make up a story. How can you expect to have action without a sufficient cause for every effect shown and the scenes arranged in such order as to produce a complete illusion of a connected, progressive, climax-reaching story? (And it is just this connected, progressive, climax-reaching arrangement of the events of a story which we call the "plot.") A novel may be largely a study of character; a short-story may deal with action which takes place wholly unseen in the soul of man; a play or a musical comedy may be chiefly a series of scenic pictures or tuneful caperings; but a true photoplay must act out

a story—a story with a big central point, supported by contributing points, or situations.

The story, then, comes first—in more than one sense. It is the bait you hold out to the editor of the photoplay company. If he can be interested in your *story*, the script is half sold. This being true, it follows that your synopsis must be clear, interesting, and as brief as you can possibly make it, while still giving all the important points of the story. He must grasp your plot, if not in a nutshell, at least in just as few words as it can be compressed into in order to make its development perfectly clear. You must therefore outline it, so that he may be able to see plainly the possibilities of the story as it would work itself out in picture form.

1. The Synopsis

The story must be briefly put, therefore it is necessarily only an outline, a *synopsis*—and that is the accepted technical term—forming the first subdivision of your script. Each of these subdivisions is merely touched upon here, and reserved for separate chapter-treatment later on.

In the synopsis, of course, your various characters are mentioned by name, but it is also necessary to add a separate section to your script, containing

2. The Cast of Characters

Almost all motion picture producers are now showing the cast of characters on their films, and it is only

a matter of time when every manufacturer will follow their lead, for this is a natural step toward the effect of reality. For this reason, as well as because it has been accepted as following the proper form of photoplay script preparation, your cast of characters should immediately follow the synopsis, and be distinct therefrom.

3. The Scenario or Continuity of Scenes

Then comes the scenario—the third and last essential part of the complete photoplay script. In this your story is not told in words but is worked out in action. That is, instead of being told by description, dialogue, and all the devices of fiction writing, the *story* is described as a series of actions, divided into the required number of interior and exterior scenes, together with the necessary inserts in the way of leaders or subtitles, letters, telegrams, newspaper items, advertisements, and the like.

4. The Scene-Plot

In this preliminary consideration of the several parts of the complete script, it must be remembered that the various producing companies differ as to what they expect a manuscript to contain. One thing, however, is certain: it is far better to include more detail than is required, than too little. Therefore, on the whole, it is advisable to send a scene-plot (discussed fully in Chapter XI), as this part of the script will show the producer at a glance exactly what different sets are required to stage the picture, and how many scenes

are "done" in each set. It is simply a little help extended to a busy man; for in particular it enables the editor to understand on first looking over your script how the scenes follow up and fit in with the action as described in the synopsis. At the same time, it is really a supplement to the manuscript, and our experience has been that it is more appreciated if written upon a separate sheet, and included with the manuscript proper. Naturally, the scene-plot is not to be included in scripts sent to companies that ask for "synopsis only."

Strictly speaking, as one writer on the subject has pointed out, the photoplay manuscript consists of two *essential* parts—the synopsis and the scenario.[1] Manufacturers, however, have shown their approval of having the list of characters, giving the names of characters and a word or two describing their relations to each other, etc., much as is done in some theatre programs. Let us, then, look upon the complete photoplay script as being composed of

I The Synopsis.

II The Cast of Characters.

III The Scenario, or Continuity of Scenes.

IV The Scene-plot (as a supplement).

[1] A discussion of the present-day requirement of "synopsis only," as announced by some companies, will be found in Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER V

A SAMPLE PHOTOPLAY FORM

While the one-reel photoplay is virtually obsolete today, having given place to plays of two or more reels, the form for the complete script is quite the same for the multiple-reel as for the single-reel photoplay, hence the following specimen will serve just as well to show how the several parts of the full photoplay manuscript are set forth as if two or even five reels were given. The same thing applies to the number of scenes commonly found in any one reel—nowadays more scenes per reel are customary than was the case when the specimen here given was written, yet the old form for each scene and for each insert is as correct today as ever, so that the present model is a trustworthy one for those who would prepare the complete script, continuity and all, and not "synopsis only."

WITHOUT REWARD[1]

By Arthur Leeds

Western drama in 32 scenes; 4 interior and 13 exterior settings

[1] This story was originally entitled "The Love That Leads Upward." After being accepted by the Universal, for production by the Nestor Company, the title was changed to meet with some necessary changes in the scenario. The scene-plot for this story *is reproduced* in Chapter XI.

SYNOPSIS

A reward is offered for the capture of Stephen Hammond, better known to the people of Navajo County, Arizona, as "Aravaipa Steve."

James Freeman, a rancher, brings Dr. Turner to the ranch to attend the younger of his two daughters, Norma, a little girl of about ten years, the child being ill with fever. The doctor realizes the necessity of having ice on hand to prepare ice-caps to help reduce the child's fever. Since it is not so far to Pinedale as it is to the town where the doctor lives, the physician advises the father to ride there at once, and get back with the ice as soon as possible. He leaves a bottle of medicine with Jess, the elder girl, and gives her directions for the general care of Norma. It is while Freeman is away and Jess is alone with the child that Steve Hammond comes to the ranch, exhausted and hungry. He calls Jess out and she gives him a drink of water. Then, seeing his evident weariness and realizing that he must be hungry, she invites him to have something to eat before going on. Jess has never seen Steve before, nor does she guess who he is, although she has heard of "Aravaipa Steve."

Since her visitor appears to be an honest man, Jess tells him that her father has gone to town—all the other men being away—to get ice for her sick sister. Steve is greatly touched by the sight of the sick child, and he suddenly remembers a cave in the foothills where there is ice buried beneath the rock and gravel. He gets a spare horse from the stable, and taking a couple of large saddle-bags goes to the cave, procures

the ice, and returns to the ranch house. After Steve has placed ice-caps on Norma's head, Jess accidentally knocks the medicine bottle to the floor, breaking it and spilling the contents. Realizing the absolute necessity of having the medicine, Steve determines to ride to the doctor and tell him to take or send some more; but realizing also that he will be arrested the moment he is seen in town, he tells Jess who he is. She is astounded, but, unable to forget what he has already done for her, she tells him not to go—she will risk waiting until the return of her father, who can then go. But Steve declares that he will go, as delay may endanger the child's life. Upon his arrival at the doctor's, he is seized and dragged to the sheriff's office, but not before he has delivered his message to the physician. Dr. Turner rides to the ranch with the medicine, and Jess, feeling intuitively that harm will come to the man who has done so much for them, begs the doctor to ride back to protect him from the mob which, the doctor tells her, has more than once threatened to take the law into its own hands if Steve should be captured. Seeing her distress, both Freeman and the doctor ride to town, and through their efforts the sheriff is persuaded to allow Steve to make his escape from a back door of the office. He rides back to the ranch, says farewell to Jess, and is given her photograph, on the back of which she writes her name and a few words to the effect that she will be glad to hear how he gets along. He then rides away.

At the end of a year, Jess receives a letter from Steve, saying that he is staying at Winslow, and that

he is now living an honest life, and fills a good position in San Francisco. He asks her to try to persuade her father to bring her on a visit, so that he may see her again. When Jess shows her father Steve's letter, Freeman, knowing that Hammond has at least never been guilty of bloodshed, and believing that the preserver of his little Norma has completely reformed, agrees to take Jess there to see him. He knows that, great as has been his daughter's impression upon the former outlaw, his has been no less great and lasting upon her.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

James Freeman.....An Arizona rancher
Jess.....His daughter
Norma.....Her little sister
Steve Hammond, An outlaw, known as "Aravaipa Steve"
Dr. Turner.....The physician

The sheriff
The sheriff's deputy
Cowboys, citizens, etc., in 1, 19, 21, and 23.

SCENARIO, OR CONTINUITY OF SCENES

1—Outside sheriff's office, main street of town—

One or two cowboys and several other citizens standing around talking earnestly. Sheriff comes out of open door with hand-lettered placard. He tacks it up beside a notice of an auction sale of

stock, close to door. Draws attention of bystanders, who crowd around to read.

On screen. Notice—

$5,000 REWARD!

FOR THE CAPTURE OF STEPHEN HAMMOND, BETTER KNOWN AS "ARAVAIPA STEVE." WE PREFER TO GET HIM ALIVE, AS HE MAY TELL WHAT HE DONE WITH THE PROSEEDS OF HIS LAST HOLD-UP.

Back to scene.

The bystanders are obviously dissatisfied. They protest to sheriff, who shakes head emphatically.

Leader—

"THE ONLY GOOD I KIN SAY O' HIM IS THAT HE AIN'T NO MURDERER. WE'LL HAVE NO LYNCHIN' WHILE I'M SHERIFF"

Back to scene.

One of the cowboys gives the sheriff a strong argument, but he holds his ground and taps his badge significantly. They are still voicing their several opinions when scene ends.

2—Dr. Turner's office—

Doctor lying on lounge, coat off, smoking. Turns eyes toward door and then springs up as James

Freeman enters, showing great excitement and distress. Doctor asks what is wrong. Freeman makes excited reply, urging doctor to get ready and "come quick." Doctor compels him to speak more calmly and, when he knows just what is wrong and hears Norma's symptoms, he nods head and holds up hand, telling Freeman to sit down and be quiet while he prepares some medicine. He measures some drug from bottle in graduate and pours it into eight-ounce bottle. With this in hand he steps out of room. Freeman greatly agitated and anxious to start. Turner comes back almost immediately, just corking bottle. He slips it into pocket, picks up hat and medical case, then follows Freeman out of room.

3—Short exterior scene showing Freeman and Dr. Turner riding to ranch.

4—Bedroom in Freeman's ranch house. Shelf on wall on which are several photographs in frames.

(Must be same as in scene 28.)

Norma lying in bed, ill with fever. Dr. Turner bending over her. Freeman leaning over foot of bed watching anxiously. Jess stands beside little table in centre of room, on which are glasses, the medicine bottle, and the doctor's little case. Her grief very evident. Dr. Turner's face very grave as he turns away from bed. Freeman goes to him as he crosses to table beside Jess. Doctor addresses Freeman, speaking earnestly.

Leader—

"WE MUST HAVE ICE FOR HER. IT'S TWENTY MILES TO MY TOWN AND FOURTEEN TO PINEDALE. START THERE AT ONCE, GET THE ICE, AND WE'LL SAVE HER YET"

Back to scene.

Freeman realizes the importance of being able to procure ice as soon as possible. Starts to get ready, presently hurrying out of room. Doctor turns to Jess and gives her instructions as to administering the medicine, pointing to watch. She nods. Doctor takes last look at child, then walks out of room, Jess following.

5—Corner of ranch house, looking toward stables—

Doctor comes out, followed by Jess. With a parting word, he rides away. A moment later Freeman comes from direction of stables driving buckboard. He says a few words to Jess, who assures him that she will be all right, and then he drives off rapidly. Jess re-enters house.

6—Exterior, supposedly at distance from but within sight of ranch—

Steve Hammond rides slowly into picture, dismounts wearily, leans against horse as if much fatigued, looks about in all directions. Sees ranch house short distance away. Shows hesitation, then sudden resolution. Swings into saddle and rides out of picture.

7—Corner of ranch house, same as 5—

Steve rides into picture in background, approaching cautiously. Leaves horse standing at short distance from house, ready for quick get-away. Creeps forward stealthily, gun in hand, ready. (If window between corner of house and door, passes beneath it stooping.) Reaches door and knocks. Hearing someone approaching, he holds gun out of sight behind back. Jess appears in doorway. Steve registers that he is impressed by girl's appearance. She, that he is a stranger. He asks for a drink of water. She goes in to get it. He quickly replaces gun in holster. Jess comes out with dipper of water; he drinks greedily, then sways weakly and drops to steps. Jess, seeing his exhaustion, shows sympathy. Asks if he is hungry. He looks up and nods. She looks at him a moment as if estimating his character and then asks him into the house. He holds back, hesitating a moment, then weakly follows her in.

8—Kitchen of ranch house—

Jess places chair beside table and asks Steve to sit down. He watches her with evident but respectful admiration as she brings food and pours cup of coffee. She watches him sympathetically as he eats. Presently he looks up at her, then around, and points toward door. He questions her. She shakes head negatively, looking at him steadily.

Leader—

"THE MEN ARE ALL AWAY. FATHER'S GONE TO GET ICE FOR MY SICK SISTER"

Back to scene.

Jess watches him closely as she speaks. He shows only look of relief. He questions her again. She points to door leading to bedroom. He looks toward door and she crosses to it, pushing it softly open. She turns and signs for him to look inside. She herself stands in doorway as he passes her and goes into room.

9—Bedroom, same as 4—

Steve moves past Jess into room, crossing to bedside. Genuine sympathy in his expression as he looks at child and notes her fevered condition. He places hand on child's forehead and shakes his head. Looks toward Jess, standing in doorway, then goes out following her back into——

10—Kitchen, same as 8—

He sits down on chair; evidently he is greatly touched by the child's condition and Jess's helplessness. Suddenly he springs up excitedly and turns to Jess, speaking rapidly.

Leader—

"THERE'S ICE NEARER THAN PINEDALE. WITH A SPARE HORSE, I'LL GET YOU PLENTY INSIDE OF AN HOUR"

Back to scene.

Jess looks at him in astonishment and questions him. He emphatic in repeating what he has said. He asks about horse, pointing to outer door. As Jess leads way, Steve picks up hat and follows her out.

11—Exterior, at door of stable—

Jess standing holding Steve's horse. Steve comes from stable leading another horse, with couple of large saddle-bags, pick, and short-handled shovel, on its back. He points to these and mounts his horse. Jess smiles gratefully, then looks grave again. He reaches down and just touches her reassuringly on the shoulder. Then he rides quickly away, leading the second horse, while Jess watches him for a moment, and then starts toward house.

12—Foothill trail—

Steve riding up trail, disappearing round bend of hill.

13—Rocky portion of hillside showing entrance to sort of cave in side of cliff—

Steve dismounts, ties both horses, takes pick and shovel from second horse, then goes forward and enters cave.

14—Interior of cave—

Steve kneeling and removing large rocks from floor of cave. Rises, takes pick and makes good-

sized hole in rocky ground, using both pick and shovel. Suddenly stops, kneels, works with hands a moment, rises, takes up pick and drives it into bottom of hole he has made. Throws pick down, kneels, holds up fair-sized piece of ice. Rises, runs out of cave. Back almost immediately with saddle-bags. Throws them down, takes up pick and starts to get out the ice.

15—Entrance to cave, same as 13—

Steve just finishing loading horse with saddle-bags filled with ice. Secures pick and shovel across bags, mounts own horse and starts to ride away, leading second horse as before.

16—Ranch house, same as 5—

Jess standing in doorway, great anxiety in face. Expression changes as she sees Steve ride up in background. He dismounts in front of door, takes saddle-bags from horse and, with Jess leading, goes into house.

17—Bedroom, same as 4—

Steve is just making an ice-pack with a piece of flannel. Places it on child's head. He stands watching the child intently for a moment, then looks at the girl. Jess shows her gratitude very plainly. She holds out her hand. Steve starts to take it, then draws back sharply. Jess astonished, not understanding his reluctance. He hangs his head, but remains silent. Jess watches him for a *moment* and then turns away. She is standing by

table which is close to the bed. As she turns she knocks over the bottle of medicine with one hand. It falls to floor and breaks, spilling on carpet. Jess shows utter consternation. Steve also distressed. Jess points to alarm clock standing on table, speaking to Steve excitedly. He greatly impressed by the gravity of the situation. She indicates that the doctor lives in the distant town. He nods, evidently trying to make up his mind what to do. Suddenly turns to Jess, looks straight into her eyes, then extends hand. She is puzzled, but takes proffered hand. Steve holds hers a moment and then drops it. He looks at her again and then hangs head, speaking with face averted.

Leader—

"I'LL SEE THAT YOU GET MORE MEDICINE ALL RIGHT; BUT *I* WON'T BRING IT. OVER IN TOWN THEY CALL ME 'ARAVAIPA STEVE'"

Back to scene.

As Steve speaks, Jess looks at him horror-stricken, and shrinks, hiding face in hands. Steve watches her with expression of mingled anguish and remorse. Suddenly Jess draws herself erect, indicating that, no matter who or what he may be, she thanks him for what he has done for her and appreciates it. Extends her hand, looking him full in the face. He hesitates, then seizes her hand in both of his and grips it. She does not move—simply continues to gaze straight into his

eyes. Steve drops her hand and reaches for his hat. She watches him as he prepares to leave. Then, suddenly, she shows that she fully realizes what it means to him to go for the medicine. She springs to his side and seizes his arm. Pointing—as if toward town—she indicates that he will be arrested the moment he appears there. He nods head resignedly. She points to the sick child. Then she reaches out to take his hat, shaking her head. "You must not go; I can't forget what you have already done for her." He looks at her a moment, shows that he realizes the consequences, then takes his hat from her, his face showing strong determination. He picks up the upper portion of the broken medicine bottle from the floor; then points to the child on the bed.

Leader—

"THE CHILD'S SAFETY IS WHAT I'M THINKIN' OF. THEY'LL GET ME SOONER OR LATER ANYHOW. I'M GOIN'!"

Back to scene.

Steve turns quickly toward door. Jess speaks and he turns to face her. She approaches slowly and stops in front of him, looks steadily into his eyes for a moment, then impulsively holds out both her hands. He seizes them, holds them a moment, then, as she drops her eyes, he lowers her hands slowly, steps backward, turns, and exit quickly. She looks up as he passes out of door, then drops

on her knees beside bed and, with one hand reaching out to the child, looks upward as if in prayer.

18—Exterior—

Steve riding hard into town.

19—On the outskirts of the town—

Steve rides into picture, going at same speed as before. Man (not cowboy, but carrying gun in holster) recognizes him as he approaches. Draws gun, stands at side of road, and, as Steve comes close raises gun and calls on him to halt. Steve only bends low and gives the horse the spurs, dashing past at full gallop. Man raises his gun and fires after him, then shows by his look of chagrin that he has not stopped him.

20—Looking back over same road, but at point farther on toward town—

Steve rides into picture, his left arm hanging limp, holding gun in right hand, prepared to use it rather than stop; reins hanging on horse's neck. He takes reins in right hand—after restoring gun to holster—and rides on.

21—Exterior of doctor's house, with sign, "Dr. Turner"—

Steve rides into picture, pulls up, dismounts, and with an expression of pain takes hold of wounded left arm with right hand, gripping it as if to ease pain. Runs up steps and knocks at door. As he is facing door, another man sees and recognizes him. This man is not armed, and he

merely shakes fist at Steve behind the outlaw's back, then passes out of picture. Dr. Turner comes to door, and falls back astounded as he recognizes "Aravaipa Steve." "You! What do *you* want here?" Then he sees the wounded arm, and points to it. Steve shakes head emphatically and proceeds to tell what has happened at the ranch. As he finishes, the doctor looks him over from head to foot, then holds out his hand, which the outlaw grasps silently. Dr. Turner beckons him into the house; but just as Steve is about to follow the doctor in, the man who saw him knock on the door returns with a party of ten or a dozen citizens and cowboys. Half a dozen point guns at Steve and he throws up his right hand in obedience to their command, indicating that his left is injured. The doctor tries to explain, but they wave him back. Steve turns to doctor and tells him to hurry and get the medicine off to the sick child. Doctor nods. Believing that the outlaw will be taken to the sheriff, he goes in to prepare the medicine. Steve is led away by the crowd.

22—Corner of ranch house, same as 5—

Doctor rides into picture, pulling up in front of door. As he calls out, Jess comes to door followed by her father. Dr. Turner takes bottle of medicine from pocket of his coat and hands it to Jess. Jess hands it to father and turns to doctor again. She is excited and obviously much distressed at the thought of what may have happened to Steve. Questions the doctor anxiously. At his

reply she shows signs of breaking into tears. Then turns to her father.

Leader—

"I FEAR THAT THE MOB WILL TAKE HIM FROM THE SHERIFF. FOR THE SAKE OF ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US, RIDE BACK TO PROTECT HIM"

Back to scene.

Freeman, knowing what Steve has done, looks very grave. He speaks to doctor, who nods head. Then he turns to Jess, signifies his intention of riding to town at once, and tells her to attend to Norma, giving her the medicine. The doctor dismounts, dashes into house, and returns almost immediately. He indicates that the child is already somewhat improved. He mounts, and with a parting word to the girl, both men ride rapidly out of picture.

23—Outside sheriff's office, same as 1—

Mob of cowboys and citizens talking excitedly and crowding in front of closed door. Evidently all are of the opinion that Steve should be "strung up." They cease talking and turn, looking up street. Dr. Turner and Freeman ride up and dismount. They force their way through crowd and approach door of the sheriff's office. They knock twice, but door does not open. Freeman calls loudly to those inside, while Dr. Turner faces the mob and warns them to keep their distance when

the door is opened. Presently door opens, sheriff and his deputy appearing, with guns drawn. Freeman quickly tells them what they want and he and doctor pass inside. Mob becomes very demonstrative now.

24—Interior of sheriff's office. Door at left, closest to working-line, leads to street. Door at back of room, when opened, shows exterior backing—

Enter Dr. Turner and Freeman. Sheriff and deputy step back as they enter and bar door the moment they have come in. Steve sits on chair beside table, handcuffed. His face shows only a complete resignation to his fate. He is neither excited nor indifferent. Doctor speaks to sheriff, who nods. Doctor goes to Steve with deputy, who unlocks handcuffs. Doctor quickly examines Steve's wounded arm, then binds it up. *Meantime* the sheriff is listening to Freeman, who tells him of all Steve has done for him, in helping to save the life of his child. Sheriff plainly much impressed. Looks across at Steve and shakes head, realizing his duty and yet filled with sympathy for the outlaw. Freeman continues to plead with him. Doctor finishes working with Steve and looks across at them. Sheriff and deputy whirl round and draw guns again as all hear sound of heavy blows on street door. (If position of door in set permits, show door shaken as if by blows upon it.) All realize that the mob means business. On back wall is reward placard similar to one posted outside (same card). Sheriff, turning to

Steve, points to this. Steve nods. Sheriff calls attention of all to back door. Then, facing Steve again, he indicates, "If I let you go that way, will you live honestly hereafter?" Steve looks at him a moment, then crosses to placard and pointing to words proclaiming reward for "Aravaipa Steve," passes other hand in front of eyes, as if in disgust at what he has been, then hangs head. Sheriff watches him a moment, then holds out his hand. Steve grasps it and turns to Freeman and Dr. Turner. As deputy turns toward street door, hearing more knocking upon it, Freeman and doctor both shake hands with Steve, sheriff quietly opens back door, and Steve, after hesitating a moment, slips out. Sheriff bars back door and, turning around, runs across to street door and shouts to crowd on outside, haranguing them to gain time.

25—Rear of sheriff's office, showing corner of building and side wall, looking toward street. Several horses are tied all along side of wall, out of sight of the mob in front of building—

Steve, leaving door, which is just closing, creeps up to nearest horse, unties it, and leads it away from building (toward camera). Then he mounts and dashes away, out of picture.

26—Interior of sheriff's office, same as 24—

Sheriff, smiling at others in room, still arguing with crowd outside. Deputy, Freeman and Dr. Turner, also smiling, stand in center of room.

27—Front of ranch house, same as 5—

Steve rides up and dismounts, calling out to Jess. She presently appears in doorway. On seeing him safe, her face shows intense relief and thankfulness. Then she realizes that he is not yet out of danger. She points toward town. He indicates that the horse he has ridden belongs to someone in town. He takes money from pocket and hands it to her, indicating that he wishes her to give it to the owner of the horse. She assents. Steve then points inside. Jess invites him to follow her in. He goes up steps after her.

28—Bedroom, same as 4—

Jess enters, followed by Steve. He goes across to bed and bends over Norma, who is sleeping quietly. Turning around, he sees the photographs on the shelf on wall, Jess's picture among them. He looks at her as if hesitating to speak, then, pointing to her picture, asks if he may take it with him. She is a trifle confused at first; then, realizing the change that has taken place in the man, she takes it down and is about to hand it to him, when he takes piece of pencil from pocket of vest and hands it to her, asking her to write her name on it. Jess looks at him, then takes pencil and writes on back of photo.

29—Bust of Jess's right hand holding photograph, showing back, on which is written:

WITH THE SYMPATHY AND BEST WISHES OF JESS FREEMAN. I SHOULD

LIKE TO KNOW, A YEAR FROM NOW, HOW YOU ARE GETTING ON.

30—Back to 28—

Jess hands the photograph to Steve. He glances at what is written and looks at her as if longing to speak, but merely takes her hand and looks his great gratitude, and determination to atone for the past, urged on by her encouragement. Then he turns to door and she follows him out of room.

31—Front of ranch, same as 5—

Steve mounted ready to ride away. He holds photograph in left hand, still bandaged. He puts out right hand again and takes Jess's, in a parting handshake. Then he puts photo in inner pocket of vest, and with a last word and a smile of gratitude, rides quickly away. Jess watches him ride out of sight, then sits on steps and looks in direction he has gone, starting to weep softly.

Leader—

A YEAR LATER.

32—Kitchen, same as 8—

Jess laying table for meal. Norma assisting her (or, if a young child is used, playing). Freeman enters from outer door, as if just returning from town. He carries bundles, etc. Puts these down, takes letters from pocket, hands two to Jess. She looks at one and lays it carelessly on table. After a glance at the other she signifies, "It must be

from him!" Freeman and child do not observe her expression. She opens letter and reads:

On screen. Letter—

Dear Miss Freeman,

I am writing this from Winslow—it's as near to your home as I care to go. But I've got a good position in San Francisco, and thank God I'm living honestly where nobody knows my past record. I'd give anything to see you again. Do you think your father would bring you on a visit?

Gratefully yours,

Stephen Hammond.

Back to scene.

Jess's face lights up gladly. She goes to her father and gives him letter, which he reads. He looks at her narrowly. She hangs her head in some confusion. He stands for a moment in deep thought. Then he takes Jess's hands and, as she looks straight into his eyes, he nods his head, draws her to him and kisses her. Norma comes up and puts her arms round her father as he and Jess stand there. Jess kneels and takes Norma in her arms.

CHAPTER VI

THE MECHANICAL PREPARATION OF THE SCRIPT

Any successful photoplaywright will testify that the proper preparation of the photoplay script has much to do with its being accepted, especially if more than the mere synopsis is offered.

At first this may seem to be an extreme statement, but its truth will become more and more evident as we proceed. Furthermore, its importance should be accepted by writers early in the work because every stage of photoplay writing has its direct bearing upon, and looks toward, the preparation of the script. For this reason the present chapter is introduced at this point, though in actual time-sequence the preparation of the manuscript in its final form will usually come after all its several parts have been considered, blocked out, and arranged. It will be highly important, therefore, to review this chapter after finishing the sections of this volume which deal in particular with the several parts of the photoplay.

It is to be regretted, let us reiterate, that so much has been said, by manufacturers and others, to the effect that no literary training is necessary in order to write salable photoplays, for, as a result, countless absolutely "impossible" scripts are constantly pouring into the editors' offices—impossible, in a great many

cases, not because of the lack of idea, for very often the illiterate writer has both a vivid imagination and the power to use it, but because frequently the good idea is expressed in such unintelligible language, and with such execrable spelling and hopelessly incorrect punctuation, that the thread of the plot, its meaning, and values, cannot be grasped by the editor. Even when the story itself is not utterly lost to the script reader, he is too busy a man to wade through it bit by bit, struggling to make something out of a jumble of confusing words. The demand for good scripts is greater than the supply—but the supply is increasing, and the standard is rising. This means that although there are dozens—to put it mildly—of men and women entering the field each week, easily three-fourths of these brand themselves as hopelessly unqualified when they drop their first script into the mail-box.

The repeated failures of the unprepared have given rise to the rumor that only the scripts of favored writers are read in editorial offices. The old trick of placing small pieces of paper between the sheets, in order to prove whether or not the script was read through, is as popular today as it was twenty years ago with story writers. The gentleman who has the first reading of all the scripts received by a certain company called the attention of one of the present authors to just such a script only recently. What was the result? Some of the minute pieces of paper fell out the moment the script was taken from the envelope for examination. That was enough. The script was almost immediately placed in another envelope and

returned to the writer—with a rejection slip. Unfair treatment of the writer? Not at all! Following the discovery of the concealed particles of paper, a glance at the first page was sufficient to convince the editor that it was the work of another amateur who was foolish enough to add to a miserably prepared script the proof that he doubted the honesty of the editor to whom he had addressed his offering.

It is only reasonable to believe that every editor will read at least so much of every script as is necessary to convince him of its value or its lack of value to the firm by which he is employed. He draws a salary to discover stories which *are* worth while, and is always on the lookout for good, live, gripping stories which will make pictures calculated to add to the reputation of his employer. There is just one way he can find such stories, when the author's name is unknown to him, and that is by reading the script, either in whole or so far as to permit his trained judgment to pass fairly upon it. The editor who does not do this honestly either does not exist or will soon lose his position, for he will be sure to overlook valuable material by his negligence.

At the very outstart resolve to *be professional in your methods, be businesslike, and play fair.*

The advisability of constantly abiding by these three rules of the photoplay writing "game" must be apparent to any intelligent person. Though the field for the sale of photoplay scripts is likely to become much larger, and the prices paid promise to become better

as time goes on, every day some new writer of proved ability (in the field of fiction writing, as a rule), enters *this* field. Against him, with his superior experience and knowledge of literary usages, you must compete. Therefore, in order to win, you must do as he does. *He is fair to himself.* From a mechanical point, his scripts are likely to be all that they ought to be; he sends them out knowing that they are in correct form to receive the proper consideration of the most exacting editor. *And they do.* In the same mail with his script comes one from a beginner. This unknown writer may have an idea—that *most* important requisite in picture-play writing—which is really fresher and even better than that embodied in the story of the experienced writer. But the merit of the idea is hopelessly concealed under a mass of misleading and unnecessary language; the script is poorly written—in longhand; it is badly spaced; spelling, punctuation, everything, betray ignorance or carelessness of what is expected in a properly prepared script. What chance, then, does it stand when placed beside that of the trained writer? And whose fault is it?

Give yourself a fair chance. From the day that you write your first photoplay, write it so carefully, prepare the script with so much regard for the accepted rules, that no editor will be able to point to it with a sigh and exclaim: "Oh, well, it has to be read. Here goes!" Make it a script that he will dive into with keen anticipation of finding something as good as its mechanical preparation would cause him to expect.

We now add a number of items of practical advice.

Essanay Producing Yard; Two Interior Sets Being Arranged for a Historical Drama

Players Waiting for Their Cues in the Glass-Enclosed Selig Studio

THE PAPER. This is an important matter, and you should *not* follow your own preference or convenience. The paper should be of regulation Ms. ("letter") size, 8½ by 11 inches, not transparent, and should be pure white.

The editor prefers not to examine odd sizes when he is used to the uniformity of the proper manuscript paper. Never use foolscap, or 8½ by 13 paper. The writer knows one studio in which the different directors, all of whom write photoplays of their own, use the 8½ by 13 size; but remember, it is the director's privilege to write his scripts on shop-keeper's wrapping paper if he so desires. So make it 8½ by 11.

It must be opaque, because no editor wants to be annoyed by having the writing on the second sheet show through between the lines of the first, when he is reading that. That is the chief, and a sufficient, reason. A second, is that thin paper is flimsy and hard to handle.

It should be white, because that, too, is the common practice. Besides, dull white paper displays the typewriting most clearly. We have heard of one photoplay writer who uses a buff-colored paper, and who maintains that since adopting it his scripts have received better treatment than formerly; his theory being that, on account of the difference in color, his scripts attracted attention and were more carefully handled. This may be true; but a good grade of yellow paper will cost you more than white, and if white, opaque paper is good enough for the leading photoplay writers, why not make it your paper? The cheapest grade of paper

that is sufficiently opaque costs about $1.50 a box, containing one ream, 500 sheets. The next heavier costs about $2.00 a box; a still better quality, a few cents more. Certainly here is a case where, up to a reasonable limit, the best is the cheapest. If you take pride in your work, send it out well dressed; but, no matter how æsthetic your taste may be, never use the shades of cherry, opaline, canary, or Nile green, in which certain grades of paper are made.

RULES FOR WRITING THE SCRIPT. Instead of simply saying that the manuscript *should* be typewritten, let us ask once more: If you are in earnest, and intend to succeed, why not give yourself every chance to gain the editor's attention and interest by proclaiming that you are a business man as well as a writer? Many film manufacturers plainly announce that only typed scripts will be examined. Therefore write the script with a typewriter. Today, when many companies rent good machines at from $4.00 for three months to $3.00 a month, and when you can buy a typewriter outright for from $15.00 to $100.00, the writer who is able to use one and who does not do so is simply being unfair to himself. Any good machine may now be had by paying down a small sum and the same amount monthly for a term of months. Serious writers should promptly decide to step out of the amateur class and equip themselves properly for the work. If you wish to experiment with your talents before deciding to rent or buy a typewriting machine, there are plenty of responsible typists who will typewrite your script for

from 35 cents to 50 cents per thousand words, including one carbon copy.

If you have a typewriter you will, of course, make at least one carbon copy. Should the script you send out be lost or badly marred in any way, you have the carbon from which you can make another, but never be so unwise as to send out the carbon copy itself should the original be lost. Make a new copy. In the first place, should the carbon copy also be lost, you will have nothing left as a record of your story—unless you happen to have kept your notes and rough draft. Besides, carbon copies rarely look as well as an original script, and the editor who receives a carbon might not look upon it with any great favor—though this is the least valid reason.

Another important point is, if your photoplay is accepted, your copy will serve you as a valuable basis for criticism of your own work, inasmuch as you can compare the play as written with the play as produced, observing what changes the editor and director may have deemed necessary. This practice is followed pretty generally by earnest writers of fiction, but is applicable also to photoplay writing, and should help the writer, after seeing his play produced, to do even better work next time.

For carbon copies, almost any weight and quality of paper will serve. A plain yellow or a manilla paper, costing about 50 cents a box of 500 sheets, is very satisfactory.

Most authors who are users of typewriters know

that a black "record" ribbon is far superior to a "copying" ribbon. The latter is likely to smudge or blur and spoil a clean manuscript. Again, it pays to get a pretty good grade of carbon paper; the best, in fact, is none too good for literary work of any kind. Cheap carbons smear the copy and stain the writer's fingers; besides, they have a tendency to make the copy look as if it were covered with a fine layer of soot or black dust. Avoid them.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS. Other hard and fast rules for the practice of photoplay writing are:

Do not write on both sides of the paper.

Do not fasten the sheets of your script with clips or pins which perforate the paper; there are at least half-a-dozen kinds of paper clips which hold the sheets firmly without permanently fastening them together. The editor likes to have the sheets loose when reading the script.

Above all, do not roll your script. If it is 8½ by 11 paper, as it ought to be, fold it no more than twice. That is what all writers do who follow the rules.

DIRECTIONS FOR TYPING THE SCRIPT. While it is well to remember that the suggestions here offered are intended for those who type their own photoplays, the same suggestions can be made by authors to the professional typists to whom they send their stories to be prepared for the editor.

The editor of one company suggests that it is best always to put your name and address on each sheet of the manuscript. This is simply "making assurance

doubly sure" that the script will not go astray or become mixed in the editorial office, for winds and dropped manuscripts sometimes play annoying tricks upon editors, it need hardly be said. But at least write your name and address plainly in the upper left-hand corner of the *first* sheet of the synopsis; then write it in the same place on the *first* sheet of the *scenario;* and, provided you have room—if the last scene of your scenario does not run clear to the bottom of the page—also at the bottom of the *last* page of your scenario. Then, further, write on every other page the title of your photoplay. If it is a short title, write it in full. If it should be a long title, such as "Where Love is, There God is Also," a Selig release taken from Tolstoy's story of the same name, simply write "Where Love is, etc." That will be ample to identify your work should one of the sheets become separated from the rest of the script. Thus the editor has your name and address in three different places, and with all or part of your title on the other sheets of the script, there is little danger of any part going astray after it reaches his hands.

The following plan for the actual mechanical preparation of the three or four parts of the script has been approved by editors in general; nevertheless, it is here offered as a suggestion, not laid down as a rule. To follow it, however, insures your having a neat, readable script, one which will catch the editor's attention as soon as he opens it.

The scale-bar on most standard typewriters is numbered from 0 (the next figure, of course, being 1) to

75. Each figure indicates one space. When writing your name and address on the first page of both synopsis and scenario, set your left marginal stop at 5. When the paper is pushed as far to the left of the paper-shield as it will go, this will give you a left-hand margin of about $1\frac{3}{16}$ inches—which is quite wide enough for the margin on a photoplay script. Write your name and address so that the top line will come about three-quarters of an inch from the top of the sheet, and, keeping it even with the left-hand margin, write the two or three lines of the name and address directly beneath each other, and the other material below, in the manner illustrated on the succeeding type-page.

Frank B. Stanwood,
392 W. 62nd St.,
New York City.

THE RAJAH'S HEIR

Dramatic Photoplay in 27 Scenes;
6 Interior and 10 Exterior Settings
(Use only one line in Ms.)

SYNOPSIS

The first sheet of the script being the one on which you commence to write your synopsis, first of all get your title neatly spaced.

Always write your title entirely in capitals, leaving one space between each letter of each word in the title, and three spaces between each word. Say that your title contains three words, as the foregoing. After you have written the first word—with a space between every letter—the machine will automatically space one. Do not count that as one, in leaving the three spaces suggested, but touch your space-bar three times. This will move the carriage back so that the first letter of the next word will be printed four spaces away from the last letter of your first word, leaving three spaces between. Take one sheet of your typewriter paper and keep it as a test sheet, trying out your title-spacing thus: Write the complete title, with spacing as suggested above, once, getting it as nearly right (with even spaces on either side) as you can at a good guess. If it is not right, space one line down on your trial sheet and try it again, this time a little farther to the right or left as the case demands. One or two trials and you will have it as nearly even in margins as it can be made on a typewriter. Thus, in a title like

T H E H E R O I N E O F T H E
P L A I N S

you will find that to start the first word at 11 on the scale-bar, managing the spacing as suggested, will get

your title in the centre of the page with practically no variation in the two margins.

Then, about an inch below the title, write the descriptive lines:

Dramatic Photoplay in 28 Scenes;
5 Interior and 12 Exterior Settings

as described in the chapter on "The Synopsis." About an inch below this, write the word

S Y N O P S I S

starting to write at 28 on the scale-bar. The O in the word OF, the middle word of your title, is the exact centre of the title. Starting the word

S Y N O P S I S

on 28 causes the centre of this word (which is the space between the O and the P) to fall exactly beneath the centre of the title. Then, about 1½ inches below that, start to write your story in synopsis form. Commence your paragraph at 15, indenting ten spaces from the left margin. Thus the neatness and businesslike appearance of your pages will impress the editor favorably at the very first glance. Follow the same rule when typing the scenario, or continuity, and also the scene-plot, if one is made.

Having written your synopsis, if you find that you have plenty of room on the last sheet to write your cast of characters, do so; but do not crowd it in. If

you cannot get it in so as to look well, double spaced, and appearing to be, as it should, a separate division (though not necessarily a separate sheet) of the manuscript, by all means give it a separate sheet.

On the other hand, there is a rule regarding separation of divisions of the script which must be observed in every case. You must ALWAYS start to write the *scenario* on a fresh sheet, no matter how much room you have left after writing your cast. The reason for this is simply that, should your scenario be in proper shape for the director to work from just as it is, he wants the scenario separate. Having read the synopsis once or twice, he is through with it; whereas, when working on a picture, the director "sleeps with the scenario."

And now a word as to the typing of the continuity, or scenario, for you should do everything in your power so to prepare it as to make its every word quickly and easily understood.

In the first place, we strongly recommend the following method for the mechanical preparation of the scenario:

When writing the number of your first scene (1), place the indicator at 0 on the scale-bar. Write all scene-numbers up to 9 at the same point. When you start to write scene-numbers containing two figures (from 10 to as high as you will go) do so at 0 and 1, respectively. Now space one, then print the hyphen mark (which will make a short dash), after which space one or two, as the case may be, which will bring

you to 5 on the scale-bar. At 5 start to write the *descriptive phrase* for your scene. You should also make 5 your left marginal point for the writing of the body of your action. In writing the subject matter of each scene, or division, of the action, *commence each new paragraph* at 15. In writing "Leader," "On screen, Letter," *or any other* direction intended especially for the director, always start to write at 0 on the scale-bar, in a direct downward line with your scene-numbers.

The result of following these suggestions will be a neat and attractive type-page, upon which the producer will be able to locate the scene-numbers and other directions at a glance, as may be seen from the following example:

LEADER-

FIVE YEARS LATER TOM RETURNS HOME.

8-Platform of Railway Station.
Train pulls in and stops.

Tom alights. Sets grip on ground --feels in pocket--produces Kate's letter. Opens it and glances at it again.

ON SCREEN, LETTER-

DEAR TOM:

Remember your promise. We shall be counting upon seeing

you at Christmas. Don't for-
get--etc.

BACK TO SCENE.

The fact that every studio has writers on its staff to make over scenarios which are good but not in quite the correct form for the director, into what are known as "working scripts," should make no difference to you when writing your script. Let what you offer to the editor be as perfect as you can make it, regardless of what becomes of it after you have sold it. Make it, in *every* sense, a desirable script.

With regard to the proper spacing for a photoplay manuscript, some editors prefer single and others double spacing. Again, sometimes an editor may have a fondness for double spacing, while the director leans to scripts that are single-spaced. Our experience has shown, however, that the majority of editors and directors like single spacing for the actual subject-matter of the scene—the paragraphs of action—but double spacing *between all other matter.* Therefore use double space between a leader and the description of the scene which follows, and between the description of the scene and the action proper. This method of spacing, when combined with the rule of placing all directions in the extreme left-hand margin, results in a script that is almost sure to be satisfactory, and is certainly attractive, mechanically.

of spacing, when combined with the rule of placing all directions in the extreme left-hand margin, results in

portant tool of all. As for the question of which is the *best* typewriter, it is entirely a matter of opinion. If you live in a small town, where there is no typewriter agent or agency, see if, among your business acquaintances, there are not represented all the standard makes. Ask permission to examine as many different makes as you can find; try what each will do; make up your mind whether you prefer the single or the double keyboard. If you choose a machine with the single keyboard, you must get used to the shift-key system of printing capitals, yet many writers prefer the single keyboard. If you are *buying* a machine the makers will gladly substitute for one of the needless characters already on the keyboard—such as @—an odd character for which a writer of photoplays or of fiction would have particular use, such as the exclamation mark.

Having a typewriter, take care of it. Clean the type regularly with a stiff brush; keep it cleaned and oiled; protect the platen from spots of oil or grease of any kind; and give the machine the general attention which it deserves.

From all this, it may seem that undue stress is laid upon the neat appearance of the script, and the way it is planned from a mechanical viewpoint. But we reaffirm what has been said at the opening of the present chapter, and, in addition, we assert that not only are neatness and correctness in the preparation of the script of importance now, but, in the good times to come, to which all photoplay writers are looking forward, the names that will be featured on the posters

and in the advertising matter of the companies will be the names of the writers to whom the big checks are paid, and for whose work there will be a steady demand, and they will be the names of the writers who consider it worth while to TAKE PAINS.

CHAPTER VII

THE TITLE

For a few moments, it will be well to pause in order to survey the road we have patiently travelled in our efforts toward writing the photoplay, and also to look briefly at the course that lies ahead.

In the preceding six chapters we have determined the precise meaning of the word "photoplay;" touched upon the qualifications necessary to success in photoplay writing; familiarized ourselves with the vocabulary of the craft; looked briefly at the parts of the photoplay script; examined a complete specimen; and found what are the proper methods for its typing.

After all this foundation work, containing the general information and instructions necessary to enable the photoplaywright to take up intelligently the actual planning, building, and writing of the story, we enter upon a second group of discussions, chapters VII to XII, which are essentially lessons in *how* to write the photoplay.

The third section, from Chapter XIII to the end, takes up the details of instruction and information in such a way as to supplement the main points before discussed—minor yet really important points which are sure to be of value to the photoplaywright in his work of turning out a script that will need little or no

changing on the part of the director or the staff-writer.

1. Importance of the Title

Nearly everything that has been written on the subject of titles for novels and short-stories applies quite as much to titles for "regular" plays and the photo-drama. No photoplaywright who is earnest in his desire to turn out only the best and most original work should neglect to read thoroughly the chapter on "The Title" in each available book in the list of works on the writing of the short-story in Appendix A, at the end of this work. Do not be satisfied with what has been written specially for writers of the photoplay; go deeper; study what has been written for fiction writers and dramatists, and so equip yourself thoroughly. We should like to write at the beginning and end of every chapter of this book this reminder: Only those who are thoroughly equipped will be able to remain in the ranks of photoplaywrights when once the various manufacturers have drawn out enough competent writers to keep them supplied with scripts. There will always be room for the competent writer, but a competent writer he must be. And as one element in competency this matter of the title is important, vitally important, when it comes to selling your script.

2. General Functions of the Title

"The title has for its main function the advertising

of the story to the public." [1] Is not this, even if there were no other, a sufficient reason for making your title as attractive, interesting and appropriate as you possibly can? True, there are thousands of picture-play patrons who go to their favorite theatre night after night, prepared to see anything that may be shown for their entertainment. But there are also thousands who are *not* regular attendants. Many go only when attracted by the title of a picture based on some well-known book, poem, or play. A great many more are guided in their selection of moving-picture entertainment by the attractiveness of the titles displayed on the posters and banners announcing the regular daily programs. As a means of attracting all such, the advertising value of the title is important.

"A good title," Barrett has said[2] "is apt [appropriate, fitting], specific [concerning itself with, and narrowed down to, something individual enough to grip the attention], attractive [interesting and calculated to inspire attention], new [fresh and unhackneyed], and short." The bracketed comments, of course, are ours.

3. Titles to Avoid

Judging from the titles of many dozens of scripts that the writers have seen slipped into the "stamped addressed envelope enclosed" and sent back to amateur photoplaywrights, one of the greatest mistakes

[1] Evelyn May Albright, *The Short Story.*
[2] Charles Raymond Barrett, *Short Story Writing.*

that the young writer makes in his choice of titles is in making them commonplace and uninteresting. When an editor takes out a script and reads the title, "The Sad Story of Ethel Hardy," would he be altogther to blame if he *did* put the script back into the return envelope utterly unread, as so many editors are accused of doing yet really do not do? To anyone with a sense of humor, there is more cause for merriment in the titles that adorn the different stories that a photoplay editor reads in the course of a day than is to be found in a humorous magazine. Yet it is as easy for some writers to select a good, attractive title for their stories as it is difficult for others.

Do not choose a title that will "give away" your plot. The title should aid in sustaining interest, not dull the spectator's attention by telling "how it all ends." To quote Mr. Harry Cowell, writing in *The Magazine Maker:* "A title is a means to an end. The end of a story should justify the title. If the title gives the story away, the writer may have to give it away, too, or sell it for a song, which is bad business." Let the title suggest the theme of the story, by all means; but keep your climax, your "big" scene, safely under cover until the moment comes to "spring it" upon the spectators and leave them gasping, as it were, at the very unexpectedness of it. Avoid titles beginning with "How" or "Why," for they are prone to lead in this direction. A good exception is the well-known play, "Why Smith Left Home."

If you use a quotation or a motto for a title, be sure it is not overworked. Variations of "The Way

of the Transgressor," "And a Little Child Shall Lead Them," "Thou Shalt Not Kill," and "Honesty Is the Best Policy" are moss-covered.

Avoid baldly alliterative titles, such as "The Deepening of Desolation," "Elizabeth's Elopement," and "Tom Truxton's Trust." Had not the three elements mentioned in the title, "Sun, Sand and Solitude," practically made the story possible, it would never have been used; even so, it is really too alliterative. Usually, the over-use of alliteration is artificial and suggests a strained effort to be original.

For more than one reason, names, as titles for photoplays, are not very desirable, especially for original stories. To entitle a photoplay "Andrew Jackson," or "Jane Shore," if the plot is chiefly concerned with either of those two personages, is, of course, the proper thing; but the class of historical stories indicated by these or similar titles is usually turned out by the film company's own staff of writers. Once in a while, however, it happens that an original story of modern life is written around one character who so completely dominates the action that the name constitutes the very best title that could be given to it. Two good examples of stories having names as titles are "Mickey," in which Mabel Normand played the title rôle, and "Innocent" (the name of the heroine), produced by Pathé and featuring Fannie Ward.

One-word titles are good only when they are especially apt. Such titles as "Jealousy," "Retribution,"

"Chains," "Rivals" and "Memories" have been worn threadbare.

"Eschew titles that are gloomy, as 'The Sorrow of an Old Convict,' Loti; or old style, 'Christian Gellert's Last Christmas,' Auerbach; or trite, 'The Convict's Return,' Harben; or newspapery, 'Rescued by a Child;' or highly fantastic, 'The Egyptian Fire Eater,' Baumbach; or anecedotal, 'A Fishing Trip;' or sentimental, 'Hope,' Bremer; or repellent, 'A Memorable Murder,' Thaxter." [1]

"The American editor, like the heiress, is willing, anxious, to pay big money for a genuine title; only she is on the lookout for an old one, he for a new," says Mr. Harry Cowell, in *The Magazine Maker.* And though he speaks of titles for fiction stories, what he says exactly fits when applied to photoplay writing. Again, Mr. Cowell says that "the best of titles, once used, is bad"—for re-use, of course.

Mr. Epes Winthrop Sargent remarks: "There are dozens of instances of title-duplication to be noted in the past year, some of the titles being used more than twice. A matter of greater moment is to avoid duplication of plot." It is of still greater moment to avoid both. Because he discovered that the Essanay Company was about to release a picture called "Her Adopted Father," a certain writer changed the title of one of his stories from "His Adopted Mother" to "The Bliss of Ignorance." This avoided, not a duplication, but a too great similarity in titles; at the same time

[1] J. Berg Esenwein, *Writing the Short-Story.*

the change was an improvement, when one considers the theme of the story.

As a photoplay author, you should subscribe for one of the trade-papers, if for no other reason than to keep posted on the titles of the various subjects released by the different manufacturers. In this way you will have a much better chance of avoiding the repetition of titles. It goes without saying that originality in a title is only less desirable than originality in a plot; yet every now and then some manufacturer will release a picture with a title similar to, or even quite the same as, one already produced by some other company. For example, on July 15th, some years ago, Lubin released a picture called "Honor Thy Father." Four days later, on the 19th, Vitagraph put out a picture with the same title. Yet this was the merest coincidence. On August 17th of the same year Reliance released "A Man Among Men," while Selig's "A Man Among Men" was released November 18th. The plots were totally different, and the Selig story was written and produced in the plant before any announcement of the Reliance picture was made. Again, on January 8, of the next year, Selig released "The Man Who Might Have Been." Twelve days later, Edison put on the market "The Man *He* Might Have Been," by James Oppenheim.

The exhibitor is the one who suffers as a result of these similarities in titles; many people see the poster and imagine they have seen the picture before, not noticing the difference in the make of film, and so go

elsewhere to see some show that is entirely fresh to them. Therefore keep posted, as fully as possible, as to what the manufacturers are putting out.

Of course this matter of title-duplication has a bearing, though a remote one, on titles that are similar yet not identical, as when Artcraft releases "Wolves of the Rail" (with William S. Hart) and Triangle puts out "Wolves of the Border" (with Roy Stewart). Perhaps there is no valid objection to such similarity, which can be called imitation only when the themes are more or less alike, but it actually seems to have been the policy of many companies to follow the line of least resistance when selecting titles for their pictures, using a title, provided it is good in itself, and appropriate to the picture under consideration, regardless of whether or not it is already familiar to the public as the title of another photoplay, fiction story, or legitimate drama. Needless to say, this has led to a great deal of confusion—and, in one or two cases, to law suits.

Bear in mind that the titles of already published fiction and already produced stage plays are not the lawful prey of the photoplaywright merely because he is working in a different literary field. More than one librarian has told us of the confusion caused by reason of Anna Katharine Green's title, "The Woman in the Alcove," having been used later by another popular woman novelist. Again, such a unique and thoroughly distinctive title as Gouverneur Morris's "It" has been used for a very different type of short-story by another writer. Occasionally, we will admit, this

happens by the merest chance—although not when a certain motion picture concern puts out a picture showing life in an American factory town and bearing Kipling's well-known title "The Light That Failed." Your literary conscience must dictate what you should do—willing as we are to admit that there is, very frequently, a great temptation to use the title already employed by another writer because of its extreme appropriateness to your own story.

It may be said that most photoplay producing companies are led to use unoriginal titles because of the poor and inappropriate titles given the stories sent in to them by the authors themselves. Your duty, then, is to help to keep the producing company from "going wrong" in this respect by supplying them with the very best and most original title you can devise for every story of yours which you are fortunate enough to sell.

4. Where to Look for Titles

Good titles are everywhere—if you know how to find them. The Bible, Shakespeare, all the poets, books and plays that you read, newspapers, even advertisements on billboards and in street cars, all contain either suggestions for titles or complete titles, waiting only to be picked out and used. But be sure that someone else has not forestalled you!

Sayings, proverbs, and well-known quotations are a fruitful source of titles, as we have already intimated. But sometimes the real significance and value of such a title are not apparent to a great many of the spec-

tators until they have witnessed the climax of the picture. This arises from their ignorance of literature and is, of course, their loss. Many good and extremely appropriate titles of this character are taken from the Psalms, from Shakespeare, and other poets. Frequently these quotations, used as titles, are so well known, and their meanings so apparent, that almost every one of the spectators will at once understand them, and catch at least the theme or general drift of the story from the title. Sometimes, again, the real significance of a title is best brought out by repeating it, or even the complete quotation from which it is taken, in the form of a leader at the point in the action where its significance cannot fail to be impressed upon the spectators. For example, a certain Selig release was entitled "Through Another Man's Eyes." Before the next to the last scene, which showed the ne'er-do-well lover peering in at the window, while his former friend bends over to kiss his wife—who might have been the wife of the wayward young man, had be been made of different stuff—the leader was introduced:

"How bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!"

—SHAKESPEARE, *As You Like It.*

5. The Time to Choose a Title

Notwithstanding that the title is the first in position on the writer's script, as well as on the film as exhibited, it is frequently the last thing decided upon. A writer may have his theme well in hand, know every

motive of every character, have settled to almost the minutest detail just how his scenes are going to work out as they unfold his story, yet, when he begins his first draft of the script, he may not have the slightest idea of what title he will eventually give it.

On the other hand, he may create a story *from* the title. Having hit upon an expression that suggests a story by starting a train of thought, he may find that it is directly responsible for the way in which he builds his plot; its very words suggest the nature of the story, and supply at least a suggestion of how it can be developed—they hint at a possible plot, suggest the setting, and show, almost as one might guess the theme of a novel by glancing for a moment at one of the illustrations, what the probable outcome of the story will be. Hence the expression becomes a natural title for the photoplay.

As an example of the foregoing, in "The Fiction Factory," by "John Milton Edwards," the author says that "the sun, sand and solitude of the country God forgot" did, or caused, or made something—just what does not now matter. The point is that those ten words supplied one of the present authors with not only titles for two of his photoplays, but with the plot-germ for the plays themselves. Both are stories of Arizona: "Sun, Sand and Solitude," and "In the Country God Forgot."

6. Choosing the Title Last

But you may decide to leave the naming of the story

until after you have made the rough draft of both synopsis and scenario. Your story is told; you know the motives that have prompted your different characters to do what they have done; you know the scene; and you understand the theme, or *motif*—as the word would be used in music—which underlies the whole action. The question arises: To what do you wish to have your title call *particular* attention? If a woman, or a girl, has the leading part, and it is what she does in your play that really makes the story, it would be best to feature the girl and her deed of cleverness or daring in your title, as in "The Ranch Girl's Heroism," "A Daughter's Diplomacy," or "A Wife of the Hills." Or you may attach most importance to the locale of your story, the background against which the rest of your picture is painted, and call it, for instance, "A Tragedy of the Desert," "In the North Woods," "A Tale of Old Tahiti," or one of the titles of Arizona stories, just cited. Again, the interest in your story may be equally divided between two, or among three, people, as in "The Triangle," "The Girl and the Inventor," and "The Cobbler and the Financier." Note that every title here given is the actual title of a picture play which has already been released. Bear in mind, too, that many photoplays are released bearing poor, commonplace, and inappropriate titles, and the foregoing are not so much named as models as for the purpose of illustrating the specific point now being discussed—that the *feature idea* may often direct your choice after the story is worked out.

A great many comedies have titles which state a

fact, or specifically make an announcement concerning what happens in the photoplay, as "Arabella Loves Her Master," or "Billy Becomes Mentally Deranged." Photoplays with such titles are, as a rule, the product of the European makers. Once in a while a dramatic picture will be given such a title, as "Tommy Saves His Little Sister"—a picture made in France—and "Annie Crawls Upstairs," the last a beautiful and touching picture by the well-known writer of magazine stories and photoplays, James Oppenheim, produced by the Edison Company. Again, there are more general titles exploiting the theme of the story, as "The Ways of Destiny," "The God Within," and "Intolerance." There are also symbolical titles, which have, naturally, a double meaning, playing upon an incident in the plot, as "A Pearl of Greater Price," and "Written in the Sand."

7. The Editor and the Title

Some successful writers have expressed dissatisfaction when editors have ventured to change the titles of their scripts after having accepted and paid for them. Doubtless some of these objections have been not without reason. Many editors and directors have, in the past, taken entirely too much upon themselves, in this and other respects taking liberties with the scripts received which, if known to the head of the firm, would have led to their being at least reprimanded. But in such studios, the editors, and especially the directors, worked for days at a time without having once come in contact with the head of the firm;

as a result, they all did pretty much as they liked. During the last few months, however, changes have been made in every studio in the country, and at the present time the scripts that writers send in are not only handled much more carefully, but, if the title of a story is changed in the studio, there is usually a very good reason for so doing.

Let us suppose, for example, that a certain company (such as, at this writing, Goldwyn) is featuring women stars only. A writer sends in an unusually good script entitled "Not Like Other Girls"—which, by the way, is a well-known book-title. At about the time that his script is received at the Goldwyn scenario department, the company decides to feature, in addition to its women, a certain male star. This writer's story, while one with a "woman lead," is also one whose plot is capable of being worked over and slightly altered so as to provide a good vehicle for the leading man who has just been engaged. On the strength of this fact, the company buys the author's story without even informing him of their intention to make alterations in it—or they may, of course, tell him of the contemplated alterations and request his help in recasting the story. Not only is the action changed in different ways, but the title is sure to be altered to make it appropriate for a male leading character—and all quite justifiably.

In this condition of affairs, by no means infrequent, the photoplaywright may find a strong reason for being familiar with the people composing a certain company, for the actual structure of the play as well

as the title will influence its acceptance in some instances. It is well to ask: Are men or women featured in their pictures; or do they put out stories with a male and a female "lead" of equal strength? Your story should be good enough to make it acceptable to any editor; yet, if you plan to send it first to a firm that features a woman in most of its pictures, as you have the opportunity of knowing if you study the pictures you see on the screen and read the trade-papers, do not write a story with a strong male "lead," and do not give it a title that draws attention to the fact that the principal character is a man.

Remember, once again, that your title is the advertisement that draws the public into the theatre. The title is to the public what the title combined with the synopsis is to the editor—the all-important introduction to what is to follow.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SYNOPSIS OF THE PLOT

The synopsis is a brief—a clear, orderly outline—of the plot of your story. However, before considering the preparation of the synopsis, one important element must be considered:

1. What Constitutes a Plot[1]

A fictional or a dramatic plot is the working plan by which the story is made to lead up to the crisis (or complication, or cross-roads of choice), and then swiftly down to the outcome (or unfolding of the mystery, or untying of the knot, or result of the choice).

There can be no real plot without a complication whose explanation is worked out as the story draws to its close. A mere chain of happenings which do not involve some change or threatened change in the character, the welfare, the destinies of the leading "people," would not form a plot. Jack goes to college, studies hard, makes the football team, enjoys the companionship of his classmates, indulges in a few pranks,

[1] The student is advised to read *The Plot of the Short Story*, Henry Albert Phillips; and the chapters on plot in the following treatises: *The Short Story*, Evelyn May Albright; *The Contemporary Short Story*, Harry T. Baker; *A Handbook on Story Writing*, Blanche Colton Williams; *Short Stories in the Making*, Robert Wilson Neal; *The Art of Story Writing*, Esenwein and Chambers; and *Writing the Short-Story*, J. Berg Esenwein.

and returns home—there is no plot here, though there is plenty of plot *material.* But send Jack to college, and have him there find an old enemy, and at once a struggle begins. This gives us a complication, a "mix-up," a crisis; and the working out of that struggle constitutes the plot.

So all dramatic and all fictional plots give the idea of a struggle, more or less definitely set forth. The struggle need not be bodily; it may take place mentally between two people—even between the forces of good and evil in the soul of an individual. The *importance* of the struggle, the *clearness* with which it is shown to the spectator, and the sympathetic or even the horrified *fascination* which it arouses in him, have all to do with its effectiveness as a plot—note the three italicized words.

2. Elements of Plot

Dividing the subject roughly, in this brief discussion, three important elements of plot deserve consideration:

(a) The preliminaries must be natural, interesting, fresh, and vivid. That is, they must not seem manufactured. It is all well enough to say that Jack has made an enemy at College, but *how* did the enmity arise? The young men will not become opponents merely to suit the photoplaywright. You must think out some natural, interesting, fresh, and vivid cause for the antagonism. Such a logical basis for action is called *motivation.* And so with all the preliminaries

on which your plot is based—they must motivate what follows. Remember that forces or persons outside the two characters may lead them to quarrel. Swiftly but carefully lay your foundations (mostly out of sight, in the manner of a good builder) so that your building may be solid and steady—so that your story may not fall because the groundwork of the plot does not appeal to the spectator as being *natural, convincing, interesting, fresh, and vivid;* these words bear reiteration.

(b) The complication, or struggle, including all its immediately surrounding events, must be (usually) surprising, of deep concern to the chief character, and arouse the anxiety of the spectator as to how the hero will overcome the obstacles. Jack discovers that the girl he has just learned to love is the well-loved sister of his college enemy. How will this complication work out? An interesting series of movements and counter-movements immediately becomes possible, and any number of amusing or pathetic circumstances may arise to bring about the denouement—which simply means the untying of the knot.

The struggle in a plot may be either comical or tragic. Mr. Botts ludicrously fights against a black-hand enemy—who proves to be his mischievous small son. Plump and fussy Mrs. Jellifer lays deep but always transparent plans to outwit her daughter's suitor and is finally entrapped into so laughable a situation that she yields gracefully in the end.

And so on indefinitely. Hamlet wars against his hesitating nature. Macbeth struggles with his con-

science that reincarnates the murdered Banquo. Sentimental Tommy fights his own play-actor character. Tito Melema goes down beneath the weight of his accumulated insincerities. Sometimes light shines in the end, sometimes the hero wins only to die. To be sure, these struggles suggest merely a single idea, whereas plots often become very elaborate and contain even sub-plots, counter-plots, and added complications of all sorts. But the basis is the same, and always in some form *struggle* pervades the drama; always this struggle ranges the subordinate characters for or against protagonist and antagonist, and the outcome is vitally part and substance of all that goes before—the end was sown when the seeds of the beginning were planted. This touches upon the third element:

(c) The Denouement, or disclosure of the plot just before its close, is one of its most vital parts.

"Novelty and interest in the situations throughout the story, with an *increasing* interest in the denouement, are the essential demands of a plot." [1]

It goes without saying that you must interest your audience, but you must also satisfy them—gratify the curiosity you have earlier aroused. It is all very well to write an "absorbing" story, in which the excitement and expectation are sustained up to the very last scene, but be sure that the theme is essentially such that *in* the last scenes, if not before, your action will unravel the knot that has become so tantalizingly

[1] *Evelyn* May Albright, *The Short Story.*

tangled as the play proceeded. No matter how promising a theme may be in other respects, it is foredoomed to failure if from it comes a plot of which the spectator will say as he goes out, "It was a pretty picture—but I couldn't understand the ending."

Another thing: If it is important that, in every case, the spectators must be "shown" what happens in the working out of a plot, it is equally important that they be shown *why* it happens. This also has to do with sound and comprehensible motivation. "It is not so much a case of 'show me,' with the average American, as a common recognition that there must be a reason for the existence of everything created. He is inclined to give every play a fair show, will sit patiently through a lot of straining for effect, if there is a *raison d' être* in the summing up, but his mode of thought, and it belongs to the constitution of the race, is that of getting at some truth by venturesome experiment or logical demonstration." [1]

Bear that truth in mind, no matter what you write of, and never start anything that you can't finish—which is simply one way of saying, do not start to write a story *at all* until you have every scene, situation, and incident, so thoroughly planned, motivated and developed in your mind that when you come to write it out in action in the scenario you cannot help making the audience understand the plot. Never attempt to introduce even a single situation without a logical cause; be sure that "there's a reason."

[1] Louis Reeves Harrison, in *The Moving Picture World.*

"Break away from the old lines," advises Mr. Nehls, of the American Company. "Try to write scenarios that will hold the interest with a not too obvious ending, with sudden, unexpected changes in the trend of the story."

If the story contains a mystery, do not allow the end to be guessed too soon. Interest thrives on suspense and on expectation. The surprising thing, yet the natural ending, swiftly brought about, marks the climax of a good photoplay plot. Many a promising photoplay script has failed because it did not make good its prophecy. The plot opened well, but "petered out"—the complication was a good one, but the unfolding of the mystery, the result of the struggle, the aftermath of the choice, were disappointing.

And one final word in this connection: The *photoplay public loves a "happy ending"—unless it must be forced.*

3. The Study of Plot-Structure

A careful study of fictional and dramatic plot will well repay the photoplaywright. But little more can be said here on the technique of plot, though it deserves a treatise in itself; but much will be gained if these few words are taken seriously, and no stories are submitted except those revolving about ORIGINAL, CLEAR-CUT, PLAUSIBLE SITUATIONS SHOWING THE LIVES OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THEIR HOUR OF CRISIS, AND WORKING OUT THE AFTER-RESULTS OF THAT CRISIS WITH LIVELY, DRAMATIC HUMAN INTEREST.

This advice applies even to humor, for humor takes things which are ordinarily serious and by introducing the incongruous makes them laughable. It is the sudden interruption of smooth going, the unexpected shifting of the factors in the problem, the new and surprising condition of affairs, the swift disappointment—it is any of these in countless variety that makes plot possible.

Learn to invent plots. Invent them wholesale—by day, by night. Turn the facts of everyday life into plots. Draw them from jests, from tragedies, from newspapers, from books, from your own heart—and don't omit the heart, whatever else you do omit. At first, invent merely complications; later work out the situation entire. Thus you will cultivate an inventive attitude and at least *some* good plots are sure to result.

4. Preparation of the Synopsis

The synopsis of the plot is the first part of the script to be read by the editor, for from it he decides whether the whole script is worth reading further. For this reason, even were there no other, the importance of the synopsis should need no argument. Besides, many companies now are willing to consider "synopsis only."

The *final* preparation of the synopsis should be the last stroke in the completion of the script. We emphasize "final" because, as has been briefly pointed out in a previous chapter, the writer should at the very outstart draft a rough, or working, synopsis, to be used

as a guide while working out the various scenes in his scenario.

The reasons for reserving the synopsis for improving and polishing at the very end of the writing may easily be understood. Suppose an author were to write the complete synopsis of his story first, and then in writing his scenario follow that synopsis rigidly, adding no scene not indicated in it, introducing no character that it does not mention, and otherwise being bound by his earlier work. He might indeed produce a good scenario, but would it be quite as good as it might have been had he allowed himself a freer rein in working it out? Might there not have been a scene or two added that would have aided materially in making every little detail of his plot clear to the spectators?

Again, a writer will frequently find, when working out his scenario, that he can improve his story by transposing some of the scenes as originally planned. In fact, there are a dozen ways in which the story may be altered for the better while in course of construction. Why, then, should the author hamper himself by obstinately adhering to his original plan or synopsis of it? In photoplay writing an author should not promise himself never to change his mind.

An experience of a certain writer will serve to illustrate the impracticability of writing the final form of the synopsis first. A few years ago, when all editors were asking for the complete script, and when most companies were insisting upon a synopsis of approximately two hundred and fifty words, the editor of a

company for which he writes suggested that, instead of preparing the complete script before submitting it, the author should merely write out his synopsis in the usual way and send that in. If the synopsis was satisfactory, his being told to go ahead and finish the script would mean that the story was as good as purchased. Appreciating this kindness, three synopses were submitted by the writer, and two of them accepted; the third was for certain reasons unavailable. It was necessary, then, to write out and send in the scenarios for the two satisfactory synopses, and the author started in. Notwithstanding that the firm in question places no restriction on the number of words in the synopsis of scripts submitted to them, and that this author, for that reason, seldom sent in, even in those days, a synopsis of less than a thousand words, giving the theme and details of the plot, he found that in working out the scenarios of both stories the original plots could be improved, strengthened, given a more decided "punch," by making some changes. In one, he added a character and transposed several scenes, thereby strengthening the whole plot. In the other, elimination of two scenes of minor importance made it possible for the director to give more footage to a big scene. These changes being made in the scenarios, the original synopses could not be used. It was therefore necessary to write two new ones which corresponded with the scenarios that went with them. Thus the original synopses of the two accepted stories really amounted to nothing more than working, or first-draft, synopses.

5. Length of the Synopsis

How many words should be allowed for the writing of a synopsis still remains a matter of opinion. Almost every writer wishes that he could use, within reason, an unlimited number. The acceptance or rejection of the script depends so almost entirely upon the interest the editor takes in the synopsis, that it unjustly hampers a writer to be limited in the number of words he may use. This is peculiarly true if the plot should happen to be one that requires the explanation of several minor, yet important, details of the story. And even though you are sending to a company that asks for the complete script, you must bear in mind that some editors base their decisions wholly upon what they get from the synopsis.

On the other hand, more scripts suffer from having the synopses loosely and wordily written than from being over-compressed. The young writer especially cannot be too careful in drilling himself in the art of clear-cut, concise, yet effective expression. To be able to tell a story in outline, using few but vivid words, is an art worth cultivating.

However, now that the market has expanded from one to five, and even more, reels, the limit of words is not so closely drawn. Indeed, today, whether the studio is one that asks for the complete script or insists upon examining the synopsis only, you may almost feel safe in sending in a synopsis containing *just as many words as are really needed*—which means, *simply*, that the editor's first consideration is to be able

to "get" your whole story from one reading of your synopsis, whatever its length. It *should* be concise; it *must* be clear and readily understandable. A busy editor has no time to waste in re-reading certain paragraphs or even sentences the meaning of which is obscure. One of the first things to remember is that certain companies send out the call for "synopsis only" because they prefer to have their staff writers do the continuity of scenes (write the scenario), instead of accepting the scenario prepared by the author and upon occasion, altering it in the studio to suit their special requirements. Why so many concerns prefer to do this is easily understood. Instead of cutting up the originally submitted scenario and substituting different settings or locations, and perhaps, even, different large and difficult-to-obtain "props," they simply provide the staff writer with the synopsis of the story purchased from you, and tell him to go ahead and prepare the continuity, knowing as he does, and keeping in mind while at work, to just what approximate expense the company is prepared to go, just what sets are available or can be built, what necessary locations can be reached within a reasonable time, and what players—especially if they must be distinctive types—are in the company or may be readily engaged. These, of course, are matters over which the outside writer can have no control; if he is selling to a concern that demands the synopsis only, he must make up for what he does not know about the inside workings of the studio by giving the editor and (especially) the staff writer *every needed detail* of his plot. Only by so

doing can he feel sure of eventually seeing the story on the screen in the form of an artistic and satisfactory working out of his original idea.

Some companies that request the synopsis only also like the writer to submit two synopses. The first, for the special benefit of the editor, and *shorter* than the two-hundred-and-fifty-word synopsis of a few years ago, is intended to show the editor or his reader almost at a glance if the story is what that particular company could use at all. The second synopsis, of course, is the longer and more detailed one from which both he and the staff man can get *all* the necessary details if your story is purchased. By reading the market departments of such magazines as *The Writer's Monthly,* and the various trade journals, you can keep posted as to which concerns like this double synopsis. For your own good, always observe the rule if the company lays it down, and remember that it is an easy matter to make a brief synopsis from the longer one already prepared.

Again, while it is also necessary to observe strictly the rule of sending the "synopsis only" to companies that demand it, one of the present writers has found that many firms welcome the author's continuity, *after the story has been purchased on the strength of its synopsis,* for the sake of the finer details of action and the technical and mechanical suggestions contained in it, and even though they use it merely as an additional aid to the staff writer in preparing *his* continuity. Such a company, of course, merely gives the writer a courteous "thank you" for his continuity, as contrasted

with those that pay a certain amount for the synopsis and, usually, double that amount if the scenario also is *called for;* but the earnest writer has the satisfaction of knowing that, with the additional details supplied in the scenario, or continuity, the staff writer stands an even better chance of perfectly preparing the blue print, as it were, of the story from which the director will work while building the photoplay.

These things being so, this writer works along the following lines: From a rough draft, or working synopsis, he prepares the complete scenario, just as he would do for a company that was having a story done to order. To this, in any case, must be attached a synopsis. He therefore writes a very complete, detailed synopsis, preparing it in the manner which will presently be described. In addition, it is a very simple matter to write a synopsis of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty words, according to the story, and have it ready in case he finds it advisable to submit to a "two synopses requested" concern.

Now, whether the company is or is not one of those that will accept the author's own continuity as an additional guide for the staff writer, if it is a concern that asks for a complete, detailed synopsis, this writer sends in what he has more than once humorously termed a "camouflaged continuity." He does not, so to speak, send in the "plot of action"—the full continuity —with the technical directions and scene numbers left out, but a genuine, specially-written synopsis, in proper narrative form. However, it is written *directly from* his own complete, detailed continuity, and the

action, though in narrative form, is made to run along exactly as it does in the continuity. This, it may be said, is almost the same process which was followed by writers a few years ago, when complete scripts were first in demand, and which we advocate earlier in the present chapter. But you must bear in mind that the method here outlined is used *in connection with* the writing of a synopsis of from three thousand to six thousand words, or even more, if really necessary, as contrasted with the two-hundred-and-fifty-word synopsis generally demanded a few years ago. Furthermore, the synopsis is written in such a way that anyone could separate this writer's sentences and paragraphs by drawing a lead pencil between the lines, thus dividing it into almost the exact number of scenes, with the same continuity of action as shown in the scenario. The minor details of action are omitted, of course, and there are little side remarks written in, in connection with characterization, etc., which would be out of place in the scenario.

As for its mechanical preparation, this synopsis is double spaced, with a left-hand margin of one and one-half inches. As the story runs on, many statements are made which give the staff writer an opportunity to use a leader (sub-title) at that point if he wishes to; but if in his own scenario the writer whose practice we are quoting has a number of leaders (frequently ordinary statement, or before-the-scene, sub-titles, but usually cut-in, or dialogue, leaders) which he really feels are of special importance, and worded just right, they go into the synopsis *written in red,* and

started in the left margin at "0," with double space both above and below them. In this way they stand out clearly and give the staff writer or the sub-title editor (if the firm employs someone to attend to that special work), a chance to pick them out quickly and decide whether or not he wishes to retain them. Even more important than the matter of keeping in the sub-titles after the picture has been produced is that of directing the action of the players when putting on the picture, so as to work directly up to the leader that fits into the action at a certain point. Knowing this fact, the writer gives the director help in the way just described; what necessary changes are made after the script has been sold is a matter over which no free-lance writer has any real control.

At the end of this chapter is reproduced a page from one of this same writer's synopses, illustrating just how far he usually goes in giving details of the action when writing a complete synopsis, and showing how the suggested inserts are separated from the narrative of plot. Let us repeat, however, that not all companies that ask for the detailed synopsis care to have also the scenario, even as a gift. This explains the introduction of little bits of detail and certain suggestions which ordinarily would have no place in the synopsis were it not that, in order to insure as fully as possible the proper interpretation of his story, the writer inserts them in this way for the benefit of both editor and—especially—staff writer.

The importance of trying to acquaint yourself with the preferences of the different editors as to the length

of the synopsis should be apparent to any writer—although it is well to remember that editors change and studio rules change with them. For a feature-story of five reels or more you may have, say, from six to twelve typed pages—the length of the synopsis, of course, depending upon the nature of the story and the action it contains. You must be especially careful to ascertain the preferences of an editor who reads scripts for a star such as Douglas Fairbanks, because you know that a story prepared especially for his use (although not written to order) may not sell elsewhere if his company rejects it. However, regardless of its length, the object of the synopsis is to present a clear, interesting and comprehensive outline of the story—of what is worked out in action in the scenario, if you send one—and to give editor, staff writer and director all the help you possibly can without for a moment making it appear that you are trying to teach them their business. This does not mean that if you know *your* business you need hesitate to send in a scene-plot diagram as your suggestion for a certain important set, or supply historical or other needed data, or give your own idea of how best a certain effect can be obtained. All broad-minded and progressive directors are glad to receive such help. But do not attempt such suggestions until you have thoroughly mastered the technique of photoplay writing and have also seen on the screen many examples of how different effects have been procured in the past. It is not out of place to say now what is enlarged upon in a chapter to follow:

The screen is, after all, the greatest of all schools for the would-be professional photoplaywright.

Here are some wise words from Mr. Epes Winthrop Sargent, in *The Moving Picture World:*

"The successful seller of synopses first makes his story interesting, not through inflated literary style, but through clearness in the exploitation of idea. He makes his second point through the fullness of the *necessary* detail. His third point is made through the omission of *unnecessary detail.* His last advantage is that he knows when to give scenes that are out of the ordinary and leaders that will be useful to the continuity writer. He undertakes to sell no more than an idea, and, selling an idea, he does not confound it with history nor expect the buyer to be a mind reader. That is the great trick in synopsis writing. Learn what to put in and what to leave out. Learn to tell what the continuity writer needs, and learn to omit the things that will suggest themselves to the imagination of any intelligent plot-handler."

6. The Form of the Synopsis

An examination of the scripts of some amateur photoplay authors shows that there is a frequent tendency to misunderstand the form in which the synopsis should be written. This may be due to the writer's being impressed with the necessity for not making his synopsis too long. At any rate, the examples we have in mind are written—the story is told—exactly as the scenario *should* be written, only even more briefly and

without being subdivided into numbered scenes. Thus, instead of writing: "Blake conceals himself behind a boulder and, as Tom is about to pass him, steps out and orders him to throw up his hands. He compels Tom to surrender his revolver and cartridge belt, hastening Tom's actions, when he momentarily hesitates, by firing a shot close to his head;" the writer may say: "Blake sees Tom approaching up path. Hides behind boulder. As Tom is about to pass boulder, he is held up by Blake, who makes him strip off gun and cartridge belt. Tom too slow in actions, so Blake shoots past his head. Tom drops belt and gun on ground, etc." Obviously, the mistake consists in not writing the synopsis in narrative form.

It is well to note another point also. Although some manufacturers in preparing synopses of their stories for the trade journals write them in the past tense, it is always advisable to tell your story in the present tense. In the scenario, you *must* follow this custom, and in the synopsis you *should* do so.

In adding bits of characterization to your synopsis, and particularly in pointing out the dramatic incidents of your plot, consider the value of suggestive words and phrases. Not *many* words, but words that suggest pictures, call up whole scenes, tell entire stories, are needed. And this is particularly true when you are writing to meet the "synopsis only" demand. Don't over-adjective your synopsis, but such qualifying words as you use should be vivid, clear and precise. One specific word outweighs a score of general statements. Consider the difference between "horse" and

"broncho;" "house" and "bungalow;" "woman" and "sour spinster." Be definite.

A careful examination of any well-written synopsis will convince the novice that several rewritings are not too many to give to a synopsis before deciding that it is *clear, concise, and interesting.* Each of these points is well worth considering carefully. Interest, no one can teach you; conciseness may be attained only by cutting out needless words and *studying* how to express the utmost in terse language; and clearness is surely equally worthy of conscientious effort to master. A first-class rhetoric, like Génung's, or Hill's, will be of great value in acquiring conciseness and clearness of style, as well as other good qualities of expression. One point only is there time to dwell upon here: the lack of clearness arising from the careless use of personal pronouns. For example, compare the relative clearness in these two statements:

"In a moment of excitement, Harley strikes Jim a heavy blow. The whole thing dazes him, and he scarcely knows what to do. After a few hours, he determines upon revenge and, after taking his brother into his confidence, warns him that he will shoot him on sight, etc."

"In a moment of excitement, Harley strikes Jim a heavy blow. The whole affair dazes Jim, and he scarcely knows what to do. However, after a few hours, he determines upon revenge, and, after taking his brother Ted into his confidence, he warns Harley that he will shoot him on sight, etc."

In the following 248-word synopsis, we have a model

of clearness, conciseness, and interesting statement. The same general form, applied to a longer synopsis, should satisfy any editor. For the second, or short, synopsis, demanded by certain companies, one of about this length, and as carefully prepared, would undoubtedly be entirely acceptable. Add to the conciseness and clearness of this Vitagraph synopsis the suggested inserts, leaders, etc., already described in connection with the synopses usually sent out by one of the present writers, and you have what comes pretty near to being the ideal form when the wishes of the editor, staff writer and director are all considered. You will find other synopses in chapters V and XX.

A WASTED SACRIFICE

Produced by the Vitagraph Company

With all his faults, Jack Martin, an Arizona gambler, has one redeeming quality, a deep love for his motherless child. The baby is taken sick. Leaving her with Aunt Jane, the Mexican housekeeper, Jack goes for Doctor Winton, who is also the sheriff. The child dies. Crazed with grief, Jack gets drunk and shoots the town Marshal. Leaping astride his horse, he escapes into the desert. Far out on a sandy plain, he comes across the dead body of a young Apache squaw, who has been bitten by a rattlesnake. By the side of the lifeless form he finds a child who has nursed from its mother's breast and imbibed the poison.[1] Jack thinks of his own child and his heart goes out to the

[1] The scientific inaccuracy of this statement need not now be considered.

little one. Jack has eluded his pursuers and his horse has dropped from exhaustion. He knows that he is free to escape. He hesitates, but determines to save the little papoose by doubling back on his tracks and meeting the posse, of which the doctor-sheriff is the leader. On rounding a curve in the canyon, he comes upon his followers, who cover him with their weapons. Holding out the child to the doctor, he begs him to do something for it. The sheriff examines it and discovers that it is dead. Jack, with tears in his eyes, stands ready for his capture, conscious that inasmuch as he did it for one of God's little ones, he has not done it in vain.

Mr. Epes Winthrop Sargent has well epitomized some important principles in synopsis writing when—in *The Writer's Monthly* for April, 1918—he says that "the good synopsis:

"Starts with a 'punch' fact.

"Tells the story clearly in full detail as to facts, with as few words as possible.

"Identifies as fully as possible all the leading characters at their first introduction.

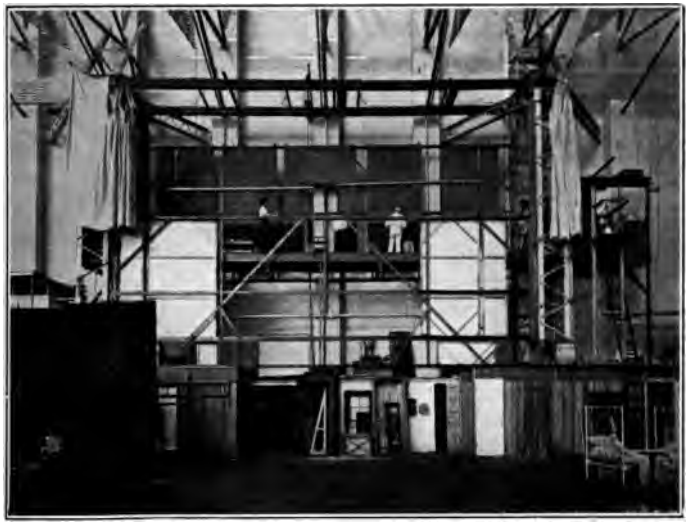
"Fully establishes minor personages as they enter the story.

"Gives *all* of the facts required by the staff writer in the construction of a continuity.

"Presents these facts fluently and interestingly, with some suggestion of literary charm, but without the use of florid phrase or elaborate descriptive writing.

"Presents facts in their logical order, but not necessarily in the exact order of their happening.

"Is as brief as is consistent with clearness of statement, but may run 5,000 words or more IF fewer words will not permit the story to be clearly told."



Paint Frame on Which Scenery is Painted

Checking "Extras" Used in Rex Beach's Photodrama, "The Brand." *Produced for* Goldwyn at its Culver City Studios

Dear Dwight:

What do you say to a trip to Italy? Father is very anxious to continue his historical researches, especially in Rome and the Campagna. We'd be delighted to have you as one of our party. Run up to the house tonight and we'll talk it over.

As ever, Muriel.

Delafield cares nothing for the ruins and historical treasures of the Eternal City, but he is mightily interested in being near Muriel, and he leaves the house prepared to accept this invitation.

As he comes down the steps of his house to enter his car, an old blind man, led by a little dog on a cord, shuffles along and collides with him. Delafield steps back, pushing the man from him, who, as if fearing a blow, raises his arms to guard against it and then hurries on, while Delafield, sneering as he watches him, steps into his car and drives off.

At the Trevor's, he is shown into the library, where Muriel and her father are sitting in earnest conversation. They rise to greet him, the professor shaking his hand warmly. When Muriel goes to him, Delafield takes her left hand in his (close-up), and with his right index finger touches the engagement ring on her finger and then points to himself, thus indicating that he already looks upon her as his property, albeit he plainly shows his genuine regard for her. She presently picks up the book to which she and her father have been referring before Delafield's entrance and shows it to him, saying:

"FATHER AND I HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING THE THEORY OF REINCARNATION"

At which Delafield smiles good-naturedly, but plainly shows that he considers the theory so much rubbish, answering:

"WHILE I'M ALIVE, THAT SORT OF THING DOESN'T INTEREST ME; AND WHEN I'M DEAD, IT WON'T MATTER"

The professor is plainly disappointed by this speech, but he passes it off with a smile, answering:

"ONE HAS TO DIE, MY DEAR FELLOW, TO FIND OUT THAT IT DOES MATTER"

The truth of which remark is not apparent to Delafield until some time later. He smiles at the professor's earnestness, which Muriel quite evidently shares, and is about to speak to the girl again when her brother, Jack, enters. He is about Twenty-two, clean-cut and jovial, and he greets Delafield heartily, at the same time asking his father:

CHAPTER IX

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

The expression "the cast of characters" may be used in any one of three senses: the list of principal characters as it is thrown on the screen to serve the purpose of a theatre program; the actual group of actors used in the production of the photoplay; and the complete cast of characters as made by the writer for his script. Of course it is not necessary here to consider each of these three uses of the term, but it will be quite easy to avoid confusion if we bear the distinctions in mind.

1. Showing the Cast on the Screen

Introducing the cast of characters as a printed part of the pictured drama is a comparatively recent improvement in the art of the photoplay. For many years the picture "fans," as we have come to call them, were kept in ignorance of the real names of the players who entertained them on the screen. Then in Great Britain the exhibitors came to realize that the added interest that would come of having the various artists known to the public by name would mean an increase in the box-office receipts, and they began to give out fictitious names for such favorites as Mary Pickford, Florence Turner, and Mary Fuller. This opened the eyes of some of the manufacturers to the wisdom of giving on the films the names of the players as well as the names

of the characters represented by them, and the Edison studio, of which Mr. Horace G. Plimpton was then manager, was one of the first American concerns to give the cast of characters in connection with the pictured story. Leaving aside the wishes of the public, it was an injustice to the players not to have included the casts sooner, just as the names of actors and actresses are given in a "legitimate" theatre program.

Following the first showing of the casts on the films, different manufacturers began to see the wisdom, as well as the additional artistic effect, of showing the name of the author of the photoplay, and this practice has gradually grown until, today, it is very seldom that the name of the writer is omitted. There are patrons who feel that, at the present time, the preliminary announcements on most films, especially "features," are rather overdone, inasmuch as they usually give the names of the author of the story, the writer of the scenario, or continuity, the director, the cameraman, the "art title" maker, and the supervising producer. However, most writers and actors feel that the manufacturers are quite welcome to go as far as they like in this direction, so long as they continue to give the credit due to those who write and enact the story.

Undoubtedly, one reason why the manufacturers hesitated about giving all this information on the film in the days of the single-reel photoplay was that they had the matter of footage to consider. With an even thousand feet to a reel, and a reel to a story, no footage could be spared for preliminary announcements without crowding the story-part of the film. Today, with

one-, two-, three-, and a few four-reel pictures, and feature productions of from five reels up, less attention need be paid to the matter of footage consumed by both preliminary statements and the regular leaders and inserts, as further pointed out in Chapter XII.

Again, today, one company at least—the Essanay, of Chicago—has broken away from the old rule of making pictures run to one, two, or more even reels. They decided to let all their photoplays run on until the story was logically told (with the aid of the printed inserts) and then to end it, regardless of the length to which it had run. Then, instead of announcing in the trade-papers that the picture was in so many reels, or parts, they simply stated that the screen-time of the picture was so many minutes, or an hour and so many minutes. From this, the exhibitor may easily reckon the approximate length of the picture. The important point in this connection is that it would seem that the foolish old custom of making a picture run to an arbitrary length, either by padding it out or by cutting it down, regardless of all reason and logic, will soon be a thing of the past. The harm done to certain productions in the past by forcing them to adhere to a certain number of feet—so many even reels—can hardly be estimated. Imagine stage plays being written to run so many even hours, instead of ending logically when the story is fully and consistently worked out!

At any rate, today, and especially in the case of those concerns which call for the synopsis only, the free-lance photoplaywright has a much better opportunity to centre his attention on turning out a good story,

without having constantly to keep in mind the matter of how many reels of film it will take to tell it—which, of course, is as it should be. Thus, as has just been shown, the gradual breaking of the restrictions on footage has resulted in proper screen-publicity being given to the cast.

2. The Time for Showing the Cast

The methods adopted by producing companies in presenting the names of characters and players on the screen are varied. Indeed, no set rules are followed. The producer's whole object in each case seems to be simply to present every cast-announcement of this kind in as striking and artistic a way as possible. Some companies list the characters at the very outset—or all the principal characters, at least—with the names of the players. Others open with a statement-leader, which gives, so to speak, the "theme" of the story to follow, this leader being at once followed by the name of the leading male or female character, sometimes with and sometimes without an additional descriptive statement. With the particular method followed by the producer the author is little concerned. His best plan is simply to make out a complete list of the people in his story, following one of the forms given later in this chapter. At the present time, nearly every big concern employs a sub-title editor whose duty it is to eliminate, alter, or add to the writer's own leaders and inserts, and this person also "fixes up" to comply with the firm's rule any additional wording that may be

attached by the author to the names of his characters when the cast is made out.

3. The Number of Characters

The "legitimate" dramatist, especially the untried dramatist, must be very careful to use only as many characters in his play as are absolutely necessary. Every theatrical manager knows that he is taking a chance, and a big chance, when producing the work of a new writer. The writer, also knowing this, and realizing that every additional character means an addition to the salary list—and therefore to the manager's risk—wisely uses no more characters in the unfolding of his plot than he can help. Even when an actor "doubles" two parts, he expects a proportionately larger salary for so doing.

In the moving picture studios, on the other hand, the players are paid by the week, to work, as it were, by the day. The photoplay actor plays as many different parts as the director finds it necessary to cast him for. If necessary, in a big production, a director can draw on any or all of the players making up the stock company, provided he does not prevent them from playing the parts in another picture then in course of production, for which they have been previously cast. So that, so far as salary is concerned, unless certain "types," either men or women, are specially engaged for a production, the film manufacturer does not need to worry about how many "principals" are needed to take part in a picture. He has, of course, to consider the salaries of the "extra people," or supernumeraries,

when a picture calls for their employment. But the principal reason for keeping the photoplay cast as small as possible is that the fewer the principal characters the more easily understood is the story. In this respect, better twenty extras and five principals than twenty principals and two extras.

Remember, then, to use as few principal characters as possible in developing your plot. This does not mean that you may be prodigal in your use of extras; quite the contrary. But, since extras who are posing as cowboys, soldiers, guests at a ball, bystanders in a street scene, or saloon loungers, are easily distinguished from the principals, it is a matter of small importance how many are used so long as the scene is full enough to harmonize with the idea. It would be silly, of course, actually to specify the number of "travellers and bystanders" used in a scene at a railroad station at train time. The director will employ as many as he thinks necessary.

4. How the Director Assigns the Cast

It frequently happens that members of the regular stock company are used to fill in in certain scenes, although they may not be cast in the picture at all. When, for example, the scene is laid in a ballroom, or when boxes and orchestra chairs in a theatre are shown, the director uses as many of the regular company as are available—knowing that they may be relied upon to sustain the necessary action, and feeling sure that they will "dress" the scene suitably. Extras

are then drawn upon for as many more people as he may require.

A distinction must be made between extras who merely fill in or dress a scene and those who play a small part, or "bit," in one or more scenes. In every studio there are men and women who are known as "regular" extras—people who are on hand every morning and who remain until they are either told that they can work in a certain picture or that they will not be required that day. Practically all of these regular extras are experienced actors and actresses, and most of them continue to report daily in the hope that, being given a small part to play, they may in this way attract the attention of the director and eventually be offered positions in the stock company. Many of the best known photoplayers in the country today made their start in moving-picture work in this way after having forsaken the "legitimate" stage.

5. Planning the Cast

Strictly speaking, it is no longer advisable, nor even possible, to plan your cast ahead, when writing photoplays, any more than it would be possible to state exactly in advance how many characters you would introduce if you were setting out to write a novel. Today more than ever before the demand is for good *stories*. Given a good story, a competent director will do the rest. He will not hesitate to engage for that production just as many people as may be necessary, whether they are special "type" players, male or fe-

male, or for "straight" parts. Your cast, in other words, must inevitably be a result of the final working out of your story. The one thing you *can* do in advance is determine whether you are going to write what is simply a good story or is a story designed as a vehicle to exploit some particular "star."

This latter procedure is always a risky one for the writer to adopt. The story planned and worked out to fit the talents of a certain star, especially if designed to feature the very unusual work of such a player as Douglas Fairbanks, may not sell at all if it fails to sell to the one for whom it was planned, and the writer's work goes for naught. By far the wisest plan is to write for certain particular stars *only under contract*, or at least to write only stories that stand a chance of selling elsewhere if rejected by the firm at which they were first aimed.

If you *are* writing "to order" for a certain star, and if you are reasonably sure that the supporting players are permanent members of that particular company, you may plan your story so as to give the director a chance to use all the people at his disposal to the best advantage, for today, while character-actors are just as busy as ever, it is the actual "type" that is usually cast for a certain part if such a man or woman is procurable at all.

As for whether a certain "small" part is played by an "extra" or by a regular member of the stock company, you need not worry. The director will do his best for every part, however small.

One thing that you should *not* overlook in making

up your list of characters, we repeat, is to show the director how he may cast his available people to the best advantage. To do this, you should not only mention every character, no matter how unimportant, but in the case of all those characters who do not actually come under the head of principals in that particular picture, you should give the number of the scene or scenes in which they appear. This will, in many cases, enable the director to use some of his people in more than one character by "doubling" two minor rôles.

As an example, let us suppose that you have written down your principals—the ones who will keep the one part through the whole of the action. You can then write:

Mrs. Brown's maid, in 9 and 11.[1]

Trained nurse, in 22.

Policeman, in 15.

Blind beggar, in 27.

Colored porter, in 28.

Here are five minor characters, and yet, if the director desired, he could use only two people to play all five parts. Mrs. Brown's maid in 9 and 11 could easily change to a trained nurse for 22. The actor playing the policeman in 15 could just as easily make up as a blind beggar for 27; and he would then be able to change again and go on as a colored porter in 28, the next scene.

A point that many who are not familiar with the

[1] Meaning *scenes* 9 and 11. Of course, you can only make this arrangement *after* your scenario has been blocked out, scene by scene.

inner workings of the studios do not realize is that although Scene 10, let us say, is "done" on one day, Scene 11 may not be taken until the following day, or even a week later. It frequently happens that one set is allowed to stand for several days, on account of "re-takes" that have been found necessary, or because a director has difficulty in obtaining a certain lighting effect. In such cases certain players are required to play the same part over and over again, even though between the "re-takes" they may "work" for other directors in the same studio.

6. Actual Work on the Cast

You will probably find that the best and easiest way to prepare your cast of characters is to keep a rough list of all the people who take part in the action, as you write the scenario. Because, of course, although the cast of characters is the second division of the script, it should have its final preparation after the scenario has been completed, for the same reason that the synopsis is also finally prepared when the scenario has been finished.

Keep a sheet of paper beside you as you write your scenario. First put down the names of all your *principal* characters so as to have them before your eyes as you write. Then as you work out your scenario, scene after scene, set down every character introduced; for example, if you use a doctor, who merely pays one visit to a patient appearing in only one scene, set down the following on your memorandum sheet:

Doctor, in 2.

and so on. At the time you write Scene 2 you may think that that *is* the only one in which you will use the doctor; later on, perhaps as you are giving the action of Scene 16, you may find that you have occasion to introduce a doctor again. Unless Scene 16 is supposed to be located in another part of the country, the chances are that you might just as well bring in the same physician again, and you then simply make it

Doctor, in 2 and 16.

7. Naming the Characters

Of course it is unnecessary to give a name to *everyone* appearing in a picture. The cast of characters is made up of the names only of those whose work in the photoplay materially advances the action in some way or another. On the "legitimate" stage any character who has even a "line" to say may be said to have a "speaking part." Only these are supposed to be in the cast proper. Similarly, in the photoplay no one whose work in the picture is not in some way necessary to the working out of the plot need be given a name. In the same way that you would write "Doctor, in 2 and 16," or "Policeman, in 8," write

Guests at ball, in 13.

Stock brokers and clerks, in 22.

Clubmen, in 27.

The following is quoted from Mr. Epes Winthrop Sargent's weekly department, "The Photoplaywright," in *The Moving Picture World.* He says all that could

be said upon a subject that is of the greatest importance, no matter on what division of the photoplay script you are at work—the necessity for simplifying everything so as to make it quickly and easily understood by editor and director alike:

"When you start to write a play decide what you are going to call your characters, and adhere to your decision. If you have a character named Robert Wilson, do not indiscriminately call him Bob, Robert, and Wilson. Decide on one of the three and use that one invariably. If your character travels under an alias, being known as Montgomery in society, and Jimmy the Rat in the underworld, do not call him Montgomery in the society scenes and The Rat when he gets among his proper associates. Call him Montgomery straight through, and the first time he changes from Jekyll to Hyde tell the audience, in a leader, that he is known as the Rat; but in the plot of action hold to Montgomery, because you started with that and do not want to confuse the director. The editor is going to read in a hurry the first time through, and he cannot continually consult the cast to identify your constant changes in cognomens.

"Be careful in selecting your names. Do not let them sound too much alike, or confusion will arise. Often a story will be sent back that might be regarded more carefully were the characters more individually named, and perhaps fewer of them named. Too many names are apt to be confounded with each other. Names too much alike or not possessed of individual sound are apt to be confusing. In either case your

story is not readily understood on a first reading and never passes to a second perusal. Take pains with your literary baptisms."

It seems scarcely necessary to point out that it is both easier and better to call the young people by whatever Christian name you decide to give them and to refer to their elders by their last name. You can say Freeman or Mr. Freeman, when speaking of Jess's father, but do not say that Tom and Miss Freeman are discovered by her father making love. Simply say Tom and Jess. If Jess's father is a farmer or a miner, it may seem more natural to say Freeman, or Jess's father. If he is a banker or a stock broker, you may choose to speak of him as Mr. Freeman. The most important thing is to make the name, as clearly as possible, suggest the age, rank, and general characteristics of the person to whom it is given.

A good deal has been written concerning the advisability of using only short and simple names for most characters in the photoplay. Others have advised photoplay authors to try to discover unhackneyed names for their characters. There are, of course, hundreds of short and appropriate "first" names for people of different nationalities; the trouble, especially with amateur writers, is that such names as Tom, Jack, Jim, and Charley, and May, Mary, Grace, Ethel, and Kate, are used over and over again, and without any regard to the surname which follows them. Simple and common names *are* desirable, so long as they really fit the characters who bear them. John and Tom and Mary and Kate are names that will be used

over and over again, both in fiction and in photoplay. But unusual names are desirable too, provided they fit the characters. The work of an amateur writer can almost always be told by the names he gives his characters.

In the writing of photoplays, where the author has no description to rely on to explain who and what his characters are, there is especial need of names that will help to indicate the social status of his different characters. In real life, a bank president is as likely to be a Casey or a Smith as he is to be a Rutherford or a Pendleton, but the chances are that, when given to a great banker, either of the last two names would make a greater impression on "popular" spectators. Again, certain names instantly make us think of villainy, while others as plainly tell us that the owner of the name is an honest man. The authors of the "good old" melodramas used exaggerated names that today would probably be laughed at. "Jack Manly" and "Desmond Dangerfield" would hardly "get by" in modern drama or in present-day picture plays; but the idea of appropriateness that was responsible for such names being used is what is needed by photoplaywrights who desire to name their characters convincingly. Percy certainly does not suggest a prize-fighter, any more than Miriam portrays a cook.

By all means keep a special notebook in which to jot down new and unusual names to fit characters of every nationality and of every station in life, *but try to get names that are short and easily pronounced.* Very few photoplaywrights adhere to only one line of

writing. A clever and ambitious writer may "do" a story of city life this week, and one with the scenes laid in Mexico the next. You can get plenty of names for your "down East" story, but will you be able to find eight or ten really appropriate names for your photoplay of life in "Little Italy" or the Ghetto? The following methods of obtaining suitable names—especially surnames—for characters have been found very helpful:

1. If you live in a city, cover the different foreign quarters thoroughly and note in your book names of every nationality that strike your fancy.

2. If the public library in your town gets French, Italian, or other foreign papers (all great city libraries do, of course), go over them and get similar lists of foreign names. You can never tell when a typical Russian surname, or an Italian Christian name, may be wanted for one of your stories. This will prevent your calling a Spaniard "Pietro" or an Italian "Pedro."

3. Buy an old or a second-hand city directory. An out-of-date New York or Chicago directory contains names enough, of all nationalities, both Christian names and surnames, to last you a life-time and will cost you little. But directories are not *absolutely* trustworthy after all.

4. When reading novels and short-stories, copy any names that particularly strike you. Use only the first or the last name in every case, of course, and do the *same* when selecting names from the directory or from

signs in the street. You would not name your hero Richard Mansfield, nor his uncle John Wanamaker, but you might wish to call the uncle Richard Wanamaker and make John Mansfield the hero.

5. Select from regular theatre programs names that please you, but transpose the first and last names as recommended above. If you choose a French Christion name from one of Henri Bernstein's plays, do not take the surname of another character *in the same cast* to go with it. Rather take it from another French play, or from a French story in a magazine.

You do not wish to find, when the time does come for your cast of characters to be thrown upon the screen, that the director has found it necessary to change half of your names. Make them so good and so appropriate that there will be absolutely no excuse for altering them.

One thing to be remembered, however, is that the picture spectators of today have been gradually educated up to expecting and approving many things which the spectators of a few years ago would have looked upon as too "highbrow." This is due in no small degree to the many screen adaptations of literary classics and fictional successes generally which have been made, as well as to the large number of stage plays that have been transferred to the screen, for, of course, the authors, publishers and dramatic producers have always stipulated that the casts be kept as they originally were made out—except that occasionally certain characters who in the stage-production of a certain play were merely spoken about and described

have been, in the photoplay form, actually introduced, and thus added to the cast. But the point is that there is no longer the frantic striving to keep everything as "short and simple as possible" that once existed, and this applies to everything in the nature of inserts quite as much as to the names used for characters in the picture. Little by little "art" in motion picture production is becoming a reality instead of being merely a high-sounding word used occasionally by the press-agents.

8. Describing the Characters

Since there is no restriction placed upon the way in which a cast of characters is made out, the writer may choose between the simple statement-form, when giving the names of his characters, and that in which the appearance and dominant traits of the character are set forth. You can say:

Silas Gregory, a miser,

or you can draw a picture of the man himself in the very way you describe him, thus:

Silas Gregory, an extremely wealthy and eccentric miser; a bachelor and a man who both by his appearance and his nature repels the friendship of his fellow men; inclined to practice petty cruelty on children and animals; suspicious of and seeming to hate everybody except his old body-servant, Daniels, to whom he is strangely attached.

While the foregoing is a rather long description of a character to be included as part of the cast-outline,

and while some of the points in connection with Gregory's nature could be more forcibly demonstrated by having him *do* little things in the action that would make them apparent, the point is that you are supplying these items of information for the benefit of the editor and the director, and that, as must be apparent, the fuller their understanding of your meaning in everything you write, the better will be their interpretation and production of your story.

It is very important to keep this point constantly in mind. Seldom is it today that the cast appears on the screen exactly as prepared by the author. Almost all the big companies at the present time are given to long sub-titles, and to lengthy statements in connection with the introduction of the principal characters. Many readers will see the similarity between the second of the foregoing descriptions of the old miser and the printed statement, in connection with a similar character, shown in the Triangle and Paramount pictures written by C. Gardner Sullivan, as well as in many others. The statement on the film which introduces a principal character, today, is much more in the nature of an actual leader than it is a mere announcement of the names of the character and the player. Thus, in Universal's feature production of "The Kaiser," the heroic blacksmith of Louvain was introduced in this way:

> Marcas, the blacksmith of Louvain, was a mighty man. This man, Marcas, lived in faith and love and friendship, and, by the sweat of his brow, had won peace and happiness.

MARCAS.....ELMO LINCOLN

In writing out your cast, give your most important characters first. Try, also, to simplify it and eliminate unnecessary words, first writing the name of a principal character and then giving the others in the order of their relationship, as:

Charles Waldron, a wealthy rancher.
Mrs. Waldron, his wife.
Bessie, his eldest daughter.
Jean, his youngest daughter.
Dick, his son.
Graydon, Waldron's foreman.

This will save words and show at a glance just how the other five characters are related to or connected with Charles Waldron.

Make it a rule to write your cast on the last sheet of your synopsis *if you have plenty of room left after finishing the synopsis.* Otherwise, use a separate sheet. Don't crowd the two divisions as if you were trying to economize paper. In the cast proper, give the names or occupations of every character whose work in the action really helps to advance the action of the play. Also name the scenes in which appear the various characters—other than the principals, who are likely to dominate nearly every scene.

The first two sample casts which follow do not give the characteristics of the different people concerned in the plot. They are simply reproduced as examples of photoplay casts which have been printed in the manu-

facturers' bulletins and other advertising matter, after the photoplay itself had been produced and was ready for release. The third and full cast is altered, so as not to be recognizable, from a photoplay which has not yet been produced. This last of the three forms is the one we recommend you to follow.

PIERRE OF THE NORTH

by

Elmer N. Wells

Pierre, a French Canadian trapper.....
Baptiste, his brother.....
Duncan McLain, a trapper.....
Mary McKenzie, the factor's daughter...
John McKenzie, the factor.....
Mail Carrier .....
Half Breed .....
Produced by the Selig Polyscope Company

THE OLD MUSICIAN

by

W. A. Tremayne

François Vian, an old musician
Pierre le Noir, his neighbor
Oscar Muhlbach, a German spy
Bertha le Noir, Pierre's sister
General of the German army
Infantry officer
Gendarme
Produced by the Vitagraph Company of America

THE SOPHOMORE'S SURPRISE

by

X Y Z

TED CARSON	President of the Freshman class at College; twenty, blonde, bright, athletic, full of gay spirits.
FAY NORTON	The college co-ed beauty, inclined to love Ted, who loves her.
NITA CARSON	Ted's twin sister; a freshman co-ed, in love with Hal Coates.
HAL COATES	President of the Sophomore class; twenty-four, dark; athletic rival of Ted, whom he looks down upon. A college leader; lover of Nita.
DAN WILLIS	Ted's chum; a slim and mischievous Freshman.
"BUCK" SLAGLE	Hal's chum; an unprincipled Sophomore.
DEAN HALL	A nervous professor; comedy character.
POLICEMAN	In 16, 17 and 18.
STUDENTS	Throughout.
WAITERS	In 16, 17 and 18.
CO-EDS	In 4, 6, 7, 10, 13 and 17.

CHAPTER X

THE SCENARIO OR CONTINUITY

The first step in the preparation of the scenario—or continuity of scenes—is not a step at all—it is a state of mind: the mood of visualization.

1. The Picture Eye

No matter how easy it may be for you to write a clear, brief and interesting synopsis of your story, nor how successful you may be in drawing up your cast of characters, you will fail in producing the right kind of scenario to accompany them until you acquire or cultivate the picturing eye. To possess it is simply to be able to visualize your story as you write it—yes, even before you write it. You must not only write that "Hal Murdoch steals his employer's letter-book so as to find out some important facts," but you must yourself first *see* him do it, just as you expect to see it on the screen. On the regular stage, the "business" of the actors—important as it is—is nevertheless of secondary consideration; dialogue comes first. On the photoplay stage it is just the reverse—at all times it is action that is of primary importance. It is what your characters do that counts. Leaders, letters, and other inserts help to make clear what you are trying to convey to the audience, but for a proper understanding and interpretation of your plot the spectators depend

upon what they see the characters do; so how can you expect the editor, the producer, or the spectator, to "see" your plot understandingly unless you yourself are able to visualize every scene and incident distinctly as you are putting your thoughts on paper? This is what Mr. C. B. Hoadley has to say on this subject, quoted from *The Photoplay Author,* now *The Writer's Monthly:*

"Suppose you have a story that has all the requirements for an acceptable motion-picture play. You seat yourself to write it, chock full of enthusiasm and faith in the idea, and in the exuberance of your spirits you see visions of a substantial check. Very well. But have you a visualization of the story? Can you close your eyes and see it on the screen? Or will you 'get stuck' about the tenth scene when it appears to be running smoothly, and then finish along the lines of least resistance, mentally concluding that the plot is so excellent that the editor or director will finish the work you have so enthusiastically planned? This happens to about fifty per cent of the authors."

Mr. Phil. Lang, former editor of the Kalem Company, offered this sensible advice in reply to a question as to whether his company could use psychological scripts. We quote from *The Moving Picture World:*

"The successful photoplaywright is the one who has developed the 'picture eye.' If you will visualize each scene of this scenario, abandoning the 'psychology' which inspired it, you can readily determine how it will appear to the picture patron. The psychology of

an action or the development of an act in the photoplay is only psychology when the natural pantomime and business make it clear to the spectator. By the process of visualizing you can readily determine if your play offers anything different from others of the same character which have been done."

Strive, then, to cultivate this ability to see your scenes in action, remembering that it is the thing of all things most calculated to help you in writing a clear-cut, logical, and interesting scenario of your plot. What you cannot clearly visualize is not worth writing.

2. Identifying the Characters Early

There is nothing more annoying to the spectator or more calculated to insure the widespread condemnation of your photoplay after it has been produced than to fail in establishing the identity of all your principal characters early in the action. The basic relationship of each character to the others should be made clear just as soon as possible after each makes his first appearance in the picture, if, indeed, it is not made clear just before his appearance by the introduction of an explanatory insert.

We urge this clear identification of characters so that your spectators may be saved the annoyance of needless speculation, and be able to yield to the play their instant attention and sympathetic interest. Furthermore, this course will enable you to tell your story and develop your plot with much greater ease, since the onlookers, understanding who everybody is, and

how they are disposed towards each other, will grasp the points of the plot more quickly. Remember that the motives actuating the different characters are virtually sure to be the very foundations of a photoplay plot.

Almost everyone has sat half through a photoplay which was perfect in all other respects, but far from pleasing because it left the spectators guessing for minutes as to "who's who."

"Keep your first characters on the screen, even though in different scenes, long enough to get everyone familiar with them and their environment in the story before introducing a new and unexpected phase in the tale. To fail in this is faulty construction." [1]

3. Prompt Beginning of the Action

A common mistake among amateur photoplaywrights is to waste far too much time on preliminaries. If a guest is expected from a distant city, all that is necessary, as a rule, is to write in a short letter, which is opened and read by the host- or hostess-to-be, announcing that the guest will arrive at a certain time. But the young writer—to judge from many scripts we have examined—thinks that in such a case it is necessary to show the housemaid preparing the guest-chamber, another scene in which the hostess instructs the chauffeur to be ready at such an hour to meet her guest at the station, and so on. No matter what kind of story you are writing, go straight to the point from

[1] Herbert Case Hoagland: *How to Write a Photoplay.*

the opening—make the wheels of the plot actually commence to revolve in the first scene—*plunge* into your action, don't wade timidly in inch by inch. To use up two or three scenes in showing trivial incidents which may happen to the characters while they are, so to speak, standing in the wings ready to make their entrances, is as tiresome as it is useless. If the hero of the Western story makes his first appearance by dashing into the scene madly pursued by a band of Indians, the spectator is not interested in finding out what he was doing at the time he first discovered the red men closing in upon him; it is how he will escape them that engages their whole attention. Once get your action started vividly and the interest of the spectators will permit you to give all the really necessary foundation information as you move on with your story.

4. Sequence in the Action

Apply the same rule of directness to the introduction of new characters in the scenes that follow. There is one main theme, one main line of development, in every well constructed story—and only one. See to it that you do not digress from it except as you bring up from the rear other essential parts of the action. There is absolutely no place in the photoplay for side trips.

As simply and as emphatically as we can put it, the most important thing in connection with the writing of the scenario is to have the action progress smoothly,

logically, and interestingly from the first to the last scene. Wherever possible, one scene should lead into the next scene, and each scene should appear to be the only one possible—from the standpoint of the action it contains—at that stage of the plot's development. If, even for a moment, a scene appears to have been written in solely for effect, or merely to delay the climax of the story, the picture is open to criticism for padding. Not only should the denouement (the untying, the clearing up of the story at the close) appear to be the only one logically possible, but each successive scene should follow the one preceding it with inevitableness.

To be sure, this does not mean, as we explained in the chapter on Plot, that the sequence of your scenes must be the simple, straight-forward sequence of everyday life, in which one character is seen to carry out his action without interruption from start to finish. Quite to the contrary, photoplay action must often interrupt the course of one character so as to bring another personage, or set of personages, into the action at the proper time to furnish the surprising interruptions and complications—and their unfoldings—required to make a plot. But all this really *is* the progressive, logical development of the story in good climacteric style.

Elsewhere in this volume we have spoken of the way in which the action progresses in the twelve- to sixteen-scene comic pictures in the comic supplements to the Sunday newspapers. Take for example the well-known "Bringing Up Father" series of "comics."

Commencing with the basic situation, the action moves progressively to a logical conclusion, the climax coming, usually, in the next to the last picture. The last picture is the surprise-denouement—the event which naturally and inevitably follows the climax. There is, of course, a wide contrast between one of these series and a "dramatic" photoplay; but the same principle that governs the evolution of the story in the comic supplement should be applied to the working out of your photoplay story. Cultivate the picturing eye, we repeat, so that by being able to visualize each scene as you plan it in your mind you cannot fail to produce in your scenario a series of scenes whose action is logically connected and essentially natural and unforced.

5. The Interest of Suspense

To say that there must be a logical sequence in progressing from scene to scene, and that each must appear to be the natural outcome of the one preceding it, is by no means to say that you must suggest in one scene what is about to follow in the next. It is when we review a photoplay in retrospection that we decide whether proper care has been given to the planning of the scenes so as to make them lead smoothly one into the other, but while we are watching a photoplay for the first time, half the charm lies in *not* knowing what is coming next.

Suspense, then, must be kept in mind as the scenario is being planned. You should not only keep the spectator in suspense as to the climax as long as possible,

but in building up your plot you should work in as many unexpected twists as you can without destroying its logic. Mr. Hoagland says: "Suspense is a delightful sensation, though we all beg not to be kept in it." So whet the spectator's imagination by springing little surprises and minor climaxes whenever they can be introduced without seeming to be forced. Make each such incident another step upward toward your climax proper; hold back the "big" surprise, the startling denouement, until the very end. The most enjoyable feature of Anna Katherine Green's "The Leavenworth Case" was that she kept the reader in the dark until the last chapter as to who was the real murderer. All the many detective novels that have since appeared have been successful exactly in proportion as the solution of the mystery has been withheld from the reader until the end of the story.

Naturally, this requires careful planning. About twenty years ago, one of the high-class fiction magazines published a story in which a reporter who had been interviewing the leading woman of a theatrical company was caught on the stage as the curtain rose on the first act. The leading woman was supposed to be "discovered" at the rise of the curtain, but the newspaper man was both surprised and embarrassed by *his* being discovered. Nevertheless, having his overcoat on and carrying his hat in his hand, with great presence of mind he turned to the actress and said: "Very well, madam; I will call for the clock at three this afternoon." Then he made a deliberate exit, and the leading woman read her first speech. But, as

the play progressed, there was scarcely one in the audience who failed to wonder why the "actor" who had spoken the line about the clock did not reappear according to promise. At a certain point in the action of the drama, just where the intervention of someone from outside would have been most opportune, the audience expected that the "jeweler" would make his reappearance; but of course he did not, the play ended as the author had intended it to end—and the audience went out feeling that something had gone wrong somewhere—as it had.

The lesson to the photoplaywright is plain: Never introduce into the early scenes of the scenario any incident that is likely to mislead the spectator into thinking that it is of sufficient importance to affect the ultimate denouement, when it really has no bearing upon it. Reverse this, and you have another good rule to follow in writing the scenario. As one critic said in substance, if you intend to have one of your characters die of heart disease toward the end of the play, prepare your audience for this event by "registering" in an earlier scene the fact that his heart is affected. Do not drag in a scene to make this fact clear, but, in two or three different scenes, have him show that his heart is weak, and be sure that every one of these scenes serves the double purpose of registering this fact and introducing other important action relevant to the plot. In other words, make the slight attacks which the man experiences all through the story merely incidental to the scenes in which they occur. Then when the fatal attack comes, the audience is prepared for it, yet they

have not been actually looking forward to it through several scenes. While speaking of heart disease, we would call the attention of the writer to an observation lately made by the photplay critic of *The Dramatic Mirror:* "Scenario writers notwithstanding, it is exceptional for people to die because an unexpected piece of news shocks them, even when they suffer from weak hearts. Robust men do not part from life so readily, and film tragedies of this kind generally fail to carry conviction because the facts presented are divorced from the customary laws of nature."

Do not introduce a new character in one of the late scenes, especially if he or she is importantly connected with the plot, even though you use that character in the picture for only a brief interval. If the appearance of a certain man in one of the late scenes will help in saving the life of a condemned man, try to plan the entrance of this character into the story in an earlier scene, even though only for a period long enough to establish who and what he is. In this way you may avoid a long and otherwise unnecessary leader just when you are approaching your climax and thus halt the interest.

6. Action May Be Too Rapid

If you are writing the scenario of a dramatic plot, it is evident that, within reasonable limits, the more dramatic situations—the more "punches," in the vernacular—you can put into it, the more likely it is to find favor in the eyes of the editor and the producer.

But too many writers, conscious of this fact, make the mistake of forcing the pace. The solid photoplay of today should not be made to resemble a cheap melodrama, in which something highly sensational is sure to happen every three minutes. Just because you have seen a sensational episode in a play on the screen, do not attempt to crowd your scenario with minor thrills and sensations, regardless of whether the incident pictured is relevant to the plot. If your plot is a strong one, its unfolding will *suggest* scenes of sufficient dramatic quality to hold the interest. But do not search your brain for startling situations to introduce here, there, and everywhere in the action, paying no attention to whether they have little, if anything, to do with the plot.

Imagination is the writer's greatest asset, but imagination run riot is photoplay madness. It must be intelligently exercised else it will fairly run away with the plot, and the result will be a literary wreck. You must study—and hence realize at least fairly completely—the possibilities of your story before you start to write it at all. Haphazard work will never bring you anything—in photoplay writing or in any other creative line.

7. Centralizing the Interest

It is almost impossible to produce a really effective photoplay without centering the attention of the spectator on one of the principal characters and holding it there until the end. Even when the principal char-

acters are lovers, either one or the other is bound to stand out in the picture more than the other. As in a play on the regular stage, either the hero or the heroine must dominate the action or the spectator is very likely to miss some of the best points of the plot because of the shifting interest. In such a play as "Romeo and Juliet," many would find it difficult to determine which of the two principal characters evokes the more sympathy and interest in the spectators. Yet a careful study of the play will leave no doubt that it was Shakespeare's intention that one of the two "star-crossed lovers"—Juliet—should dominate the action of the drama very subtly and certainly, the other being, though in only the slightest degree, it is true, subordinate to the "principal." The same thing is true in the stories of Damon and Pythias, Paolo and Francesca, and Pelleas and Melisande. You must determine at the very beginning whether it is to be the man or the woman, and, having trained the spot-light upon that one, keep it there until the end.

A certain picture, released about four years ago by a European manufacturer, was concerned with a husband, his wife, and his friend—a man who for a period of some months was a guest in the home of the pair. In the ordinary sense, it was not a problem plot; the friend was an honorable man, and the husband, who had the most sincere admiration for his old college companion, was a fine fellow in every way. Yet, as the story progressed it became apparent that there had been a love affair between the wife and her

husband's friend when they were both scarcely more than children. Little incidents in the action of the next few scenes gradually caused the audience to sympathize with the friend. Then, toward the end of the play, the sympathy was definitely shifted to the husband. This, of course, viewed in the proper light, was as it should be; but only a scene or two from the end of the picture an incident happened that again caused the audience to feel that it was the friend who alone deserved the woman's love. The result was that out of all the hundreds of people who saw the picture in the two days during which it was shown at a certain theatre, none expressed themselves as being satisfied with it, although only a few were able to say directly that they did not approve of the play because of the frequently shifted interest.

Thus the picture failed because whoever wrote it did not keep in mind the important fact that divided interest will go a long way toward destroying the dramatic value of any story, regardless of how perfect it may be otherwise.

Use as few principals as possible, no matter how many minor characters or extra people are employed; and be sure to keep the subordinate characters in the background sufficiently to prevent them from detracting in any way from the interest that should be constantly fixed upon your principals, and especially the *two* principals who make possible nine-tenths of all the stories written.

8. Managing Changes of Scene

In preparing the scenario it is important to remember that if a leader is introduced *before* a scene, the leader should be written first, and followed by the number and description of the scene. And in describing your scenes you should study the convenience of the director: where more than one scene is to be done in a set, refer back to the *original* scene number. Thus if Scene 5 is the sheriff's office, and the same background is used for scenes 7, 9, and 14, when writing Scene 14 say:

14—Sheriff's office, same as 5—

No matter how many times that setting may be used as the background for a scene of your story, write it out every time just as you did at first. Do not merely say: Same as 5. Follow the scene number, whether it be 7, 9, or 14, with: "Sheriff's office;" then add the "same as 5." Also, do not forget what was said in Chapter VI regarding the writing of your scene-number at 0 (or 0 and 1, if there are two figures) on the scale-bar of your typewriter. In this way, if 5 is your left marginal stop, you will have almost a half-inch space between the number and the description of the scene. Bridge this space with the hyphen or short-dash character, and you will be sure that the director's attention is quickly drawn to each change of scene.

It is extremely important to remember that in telling your story in action even the slightest change of location means another scene. Let us make this point perfectly clear:

Suppose you have a scene in which a fire ladder is placed against the wall of a burning building, only the lower part of the ladder showing in the picture. A fireman starts to mount, and finally disappears overhead. The scene changes, and we see the upper windows of the building and the upper portion of the ladder. Suddenly the fireman's head appears as he climbs up (into the picture), then his whole body comes into view, and presently he climbs in at one of the windows.

These are written in as two separate scenes, though it is plain that in real life they are actually one, and in the photoplay they are not separated even by an insert of any kind, thus seeming to be one, as intended.

But now suppose that when the fireman starts up the ladder the cameraman "follows him"—tilts his camera so that the result is a "shifting stage"—the eye of the spectator following the fireman as he goes up and until he reaches the top of the ladder and climbs in at the window. That, of course, constitutes only one scene—the swinging of the camera to follow the progress of the actor simply enlarges the stage, as it were. Such scenes as this second one are frequently seen in photoplays—an aëroplane leaving the ground and rising in its flight, a band of horsemen riding "across" and eventually "out of" a picture, a man climbing down the side of a cliff, and the like. But as a rule they are simply arranged by the director's instructing the cameraman to swing his camera as described—the writer of the script does not introduce an actual direc-

tion to the director to obtain the effect in this way but writes them in as two scenes.

In taking such panoramic scenes as those just described, the tripod of the camera remains unmoved. Even in a railroad drama, where we see an engine run down a track for a quarter of a mile or more, the camera is mounted on another train, which closely follows the one seen in the picture, and hence it is plainly, from a technical standpoint, only one scene, though while it is being shown on the screen the background is changing continuously. It is the *abrupt* shifting from one locality to another that constitutes a "change of scene" in the photoplay.

This being so, it follows that each change of scene must be given a separate scene-number in your scenario. We have examined dozens of amateur scripts in which scenes would be found written thus:

8—Library, same as 2.

Tom looks on floor, fails to find locket, and then goes into one room after another searching for it.

This, of course, is impossible. Even though the director were willing to show Tom going through the different rooms looking for the lost piece of jewelry, each scene would have to be separately and consecutively numbered in the scenario. If in the tenth room visited Tom should find the locket and then go out on the piazza to speak to Mabel about it, the scene showing the piazza would be 18 and not 9.

It is quite as incorrect to divide into two or more parts the action of what should be one scene, as already

explained, as it is to try to make one scene out of two or more by running them together in the way illustrated in the foregoing bad example. To avoid both errors, bear in mind that besides giving every scene a separate scene number, you must write a scene into your scenario whenever it is necessary to supply a new background for some bit of action. For example, you cannot say:

Scene 4. John comes out of the store, walks down the street for a couple of blocks, and enters the bank on the corner.

That much action would be written about as follows:

1—Exterior of store.

John comes out of store and walks down street, out of picture.

2—Street.

Enter John. Passes down street and out of picture.

3—Exterior of bank on street corner.

John comes down street, approaches bank, and enters.

In the foregoing example, three scenes are given to show how John gets from the store to the bank; but it might not be really necessary to take three scenes to show this action. We might see John leave the store and start down the street, the camera being set up in such a way as to take in not only the doorway of the store but also a considerable portion of the street. If

the scene showing the front of the bank were planned in the same way, so as to show John approaching up the street, as though coming from the store, the connecting scene (2), which merely shows him between the two points, could very well be left out altogther, to be supplied by the imagination of the spectators.

Experience alone—combined with the study of the pictures seen on the screen—can teach you just what scenes are really necessary and which may be avoided; the point to remember is that you should not waste footage on even the shortest scene that can be eliminated without detracting from the interest or breaking the logical sequence of the events in your story. In other words, make it your hard and fast rule to write *nothing* into your scenario that does not aid materially in telling your story and making your meaning clear to the spectator. On the other hand, see that you *omit nothing* that will tend to produce the same result.

Going back to the example just given, we would point out that we purposely introduced into it an example of what *not* to do. Scene 3 is described as the "exterior of bank *on street corner.*" That is something that it is best to leave entirely to the director. Let him do the locating of all the buildings used in a story, unless there is an exceptionally good reason why you should specify just where a certain building ought to be. The chances are that there is no special reason why the bank in your story should be located on the corner of the street, and the director might be able to *locate* a bank suitable for the purpose of the scene in *question within* a block or two of the studio. If there

is a really important reason for having the bank on the corner, he may have to go a mile or more away from the studio to find one; and, inasmuch as it is frequently the case that the director will take his cameraman and the necessary actor or actors out with him, and do such a scene as this one outside the bank while another set is being built up inside the studio for him to work in, it will easily be seen that the more you can help him out by making things convenient for him the more likely he is to express a desire to examine other stories written by you.

This point will bear repeating: A scene is so much of the entire action as is taken in one place without stopping the camera; in its photoplay sense, *scene* never refers to the action between certain players, nor does a new scene commence when another character enters upon a scene already in course of action.

It is a mistake, in working out the scenario, to keep the action in the same setting too long at a time. Frequent changes of scene are advisable. In his article in *The Photoplay Author* for March, 1913, Mr. C. B. Hoadley tells of a script written by a well-known actress who is also the author of several successful "legitimate" dramas. Having appeared in a notable picture drama, she determined to take up photoplay writing herself. Her first effort—a comedy drama—was returned. The lady was highly indignant; yet the reason for the rejection of her script becomes apparent when it is known that the entire action of her story occurred in a hotel corridor and in a room in the same hostelry. Only nineteen scenes were used,

and of these, eighteen were to be played in the one room without a break in the settings. Imagine the monotony of such a production, even on the regular stage!

But while it is best to have a frequent change of scene, it is also a mistake to risk confusing the spectator by changing often from one scene to another far removed from the first, especially without the use of some explanatory insert.

In connection with the error of some amateur writers referred to on page 146, of making what is (or would be, if their script was worked out as planned by them) actually one scene when they intend it to be two, it may be said that this is one of the commonest and most amusing errors of beginners. The mistake lies simply in their failure to observe the rule of *always separating two different scenes in the same set or location by interposing a scene in a different setting, or by introducing a leader.* If this rule is not observed, the result—even though it goes no farther than the amateur script—is decidedly funny. To illustrate, take the following example:

23—Bedroom, same as 12—

Thorn, still looking through contents of bureau drawer, stops, listens, indicates that he hears someone coming down hall, and then, closing drawer, crosses to the window again and makes his escape.

24—Bedroom, same as 12—

Tom is sitting at the table opening the letters laid there by the landlady. He opens one, etc., etc.

A glance at the foregoing will show that, if produced as written, the result on the screen would be a continuous scene in the bedroom setting. Thorn would be seen making his exit by way of the window, and then *instantly* there would be Tom sitting at the table, opening his mail! There would be lacking the logical action of his coming into the room, crossing to the table, and sitting down. The whole effect would be much the same as in those "fairy" plays produced several years ago, where "stop camera" work was resorted to to obtain the effect of a supernatural being suddenly appearing on the scene, greatly to the astonishment of the mere mortals present.

Introduce a scene showing Thorn just landing on the ground after sliding down a rain-water pipe from the roof of the veranda, or even insert a leader between the two scenes as now written, and the mind of the spectator is prepared for almost anything that he may find to be going on in that room when he sees it again. But too much care cannot be taken to guard against everything that may make for jerky or illogical action of this kind. The merciless scissors of a careless operator in the picture theatre may remove three or four inches of the film at a certain point, with the result that a character leaving one side of the room and starting to go out by the door on the other side may be made to cross the room at a bound, causing a surprised

laugh at a very serious moment of your play. Do not approximate this ludicrous effect by writing your scenes as illustrated in the foregoing example.

Still another laughable error of the novice is to introduce into a scene certain action which could not be properly registered in mere pantomime. We lately examined an amateur script in which the following appeared as part of the action between a girl and a man in a farm location:

> so (Mary) tells the stranger that her father is over in the next field, milking the cow. He starts to, etc.

Now, whether or not the spectator in the theatre were shown a previous scene in which Father actually milked a cow, the pantomime of Mary, in trying to make plain without the aid of a cut-in leader the fact that she was telling the man what her father was doing, would be extremely ludicrous, to say the least. You must give thought to every bit of action you write, remembering that it is of no use to say that so-and-so happens if the action described will not register clearly in pantomime. Here again experience will teach you what to put in and what to leave out.

9. The "Cut-Back"

Readers of the boys' story papers published a few years ago will remember how at the end of one chapter the hero would be left hanging by a slender vine

over a yawning chasm, "one thousand feet deep." The next chapter, instead of continuing the logical sequence of action and explaining how he was rescued—or rescued himself—would begin: "Let us now return to Captain Barlow and Professor Whipple, whom we left facing the band of dwarfs at the mouth of the cave, etc." These stories exemplified practically the same technique as is employed today by photoplaywrights who use what has become known as the "cut-back," sometimes referred to as the "flash-back."

Mr. D. W. Griffith is commonly credited with having "invented" this technical device, which is simply a frequent switching from one scene to another, and then back again to the first, in order to heighten interest by maintaining the suspense. Its use has been well illustrated by Mr. C. B. Hoadley, who cites a play in which the contrasting pictures of "a gambler seated at cards with convivial companions, and his wife at home in a scantily furnished room keeping vigil at the bedside of their sick child," are flashed back and forth in such a manner as to keep the contrast before the spectators while yet developing the drama effectively.

Another good example of the use of the cut-back was shown in an old Biograph subject, "Three Friends." One of three friends who have sworn never to separate falls in love with a young woman of the village and marries her. A second of the trio is enraged to think that his friend has broken up the triangle; the third, of better nature, is merely very much disappointed. As a result of breaking up the trio, the two bachelors leave the factory to go to an-

other town. A baby is born to the young married couple, and they are very happy for a time. Then the second friend, Jim, comes back to his old shop to take the position of foreman. As the result of a quarrel between him and the young husband, the latter is discharged. From that time on things go badly with the young couple, and soon bad is followed by worse. When they are on the verge of starvation, and the husband has returned home after a fruitless search for work, the wife goes out to try to beg a bottle of milk. While she is away, the husband, thoroughly disheartened, resolves to ask her to die with him, confident that neighbors will care for the child. She returns home empty handed, and, though at first shocked and horrified by his proposal, finally consents. Just as the husband covers his wife's eyes with his hand and raises the pistol, the two friends of former days burst into the room. One of the husband's shop-mates has told the third friend of how "Jim fired him"—as a leader tells us—and the reproaches of the third friend have been instrumental in bringing about a feeling of remorse in the heart of the foreman. The two hurry together to the little home, arriving just in time to prevent the tragedy.

All through this picture the cut-back is used most effectively. Early in the action, supposedly a day or two after the young man had met his future wife, we are shown the two other men waiting for him at the saloon, the three glasses of beer standing untouched upon the table. The scene then switches to the young *man* and the girl out walking, gazing from a bridge

into the river. Back to the saloon again, and we see the two friends looking at their watches, about to leave, the third glass still standing untouched. Then, back to another pretty exterior, where the young man proposes and is accepted. Toward the climax, the use of the cut-back becomes even more effective: we see the wife go out to get the milk; the two friends at the same old table in the saloon; the husband bending over the child, taking out the revolver, and indicating what is in his mind to do; then the scene in the saloon, where the fourth man tells the kind-hearted friend how the foreman has discharged his former comrade; back in the house again, we see the man and the woman prepared to die together; then the exterior of the saloon, with the two friends coming out; another home scene leading up to the expected tragedy; the two friends hurrying down a street—and even though they are hurrying, we know that they are unaware of what is going on in the house which is their destination, and we are fearful lest they may arrive too late; the man with his hand held over the eyes of his wife, the revolver being slowly raised; the two friends at the gate of the cottage; and then the climax as they enter the room just in time to avert the tragedy. Thus the cut-back effect kept suspense and interest at highest pitch every moment.

Some years ago the same company released a drama, "The Cord of Life," in which the cut-back was used so effectively to heighten the suspense and add to the thrill that many people in the audience of the theatre were leaning forward in their seats and making ex-

cited comments—the supreme test of a picture "with a punch."

One caution is necessary in the use of the cut-back—*do not use it as an excuse to digress.* Above everything else, when you have started the ball of your plot rolling, keep it rolling *forward.* You must not switch back to some earlier scene for the purpose of picking up a point that you have overlooked. Nor is it possible to go back and follow the characters who have been temporarily dispensed with. If they reappear, it must be in a scene which naturally follows, and does not come with a sense of perplexing surprise. Remember this: When characters are reintroduced they must not have been too long absent from the plot-movement, but they must have been all the time consciously or subconsciously present in the mind of the spectator *as being essentially in the story.*

Unfriendly critics of the photoplay—and there are some such—have said some harsh things about "the mugging close-up and the nerve-wracking cut-backs," nor have their criticisms been wholly without point and justification. But only, of course, when these technical devices are abused by over-use. Mr. Sargent has pointed out that the close-up of the silent drama is only another form of the spot-light used on the regular stage, and, similarly, the cut-back finds its duplicate in the "off-stage" sound-effects of the regular drama. Instead of the "galloping horse" effects of the legitimate stage, we get on the screen the actual scene of the horseman dashing ahead. But anything overdone is bad, and cut-backs and other similar devices are no

exception to this rule. Not only is our attention called to the fact that the writer or director is working a certain technical trick to death, but in following the story its working out is spoiled for us as a result of the very thing used with the intention of heightening our interest.

"Even Griffith, in his big production, 'Hearts of the World,' taxes suspense too far at one point," says Mr. Sargent. "So clever a trickster as he (and, like Belasco, he is more the artistic trickster than the artist) has failed to realize that suspense, carried too far, becomes first tiresome and then amusing. This applies most directly to the single situation, but it is almost equally applicable to a situation strong in itself, but which is depended upon to yield suspense out of proportion to its value."

And, since Mr. Griffith's main suspense-producer has always been his self-invented cut-back device, the error of over-using this technical trick is made even more apparent by what this critic points out. Here again a careful study of the methods of several different leading directors is your best guide.

10. How Various Kinds of Inserts Are Used

The use of leaders, letters, and other inserts needs some treatment in connection with the scenario. The ordinary statement-leader, such as "Two years later. Bob returns to his old home," is used before the scene to which it applies. It shows the spectator the passage of time, and explains what is about to follow. The

ordinary before-the-scene leader is frequently employed to make such a statement as: "Tom accuses his brother of having forged the check." But the other way of telling the audience what Tom does is the use of the cut-in leader—of which more later. This enables us to read Tom's own words—the distinguishing mark of the cut-in.

This very effective form of the leader takes its name from the fact that it cuts in, or is inserted into, the midst of a scene. That the cut-in leader may tell all that is necessary much better than could a long statement of what is going on is evident because the direct words of a character are more effective than the same ideas expressed in the third person.

Another consideration is that using the cut-in and omitting the leader before the scene makes it possible to start the scene with action that does not at first disclose Tom's intention. Then when the proper moment arrives, the cut-in leader is flashed on the screen, and the result is that, instead of the spectator's anticipating what is about to happen, he is likely to be as much taken by surprise as is the guilty brother.

After introducing the cut-in leader, write *Back to scene,* the same as after an inserted letter, telegram, newspaper item, or the like.

In what follows we give examples of proper scenario form, as well as examples of the way in which the leader, cut-in leader, letter, bust, and mask are used.

View of Stage, Lubin Studio, Los Angeles, California

Wardrobe Room in a Photoplay Studio

Leader—TOM DISCOVERS HIS BROTHER'S CRIME

9—Maxwell's library, same as 4—

Tom enters, followed by Ralph. Tom goes straight to desk, opens it, and takes out envelope. From it he takes Ralph's letter and the check. Glances over letter again, Ralph standing by, watching him with nervous expression.

On screen, letter.

Dear Blakely:

I send you enclosed my father's check to cover amount of my debt to you. Kindly send receipt to me at old address.

Yours,

RALPH MAXWELL.

Back to scene.

Tom lays letter on desk and picks up check, looking at it closely. Suddenly starts, frowns, glances at Ralph, and then looks intently at check again. Opens drawer of desk and takes out reading-glass. Holding check in left hand, he examines it closely through the glass.

10—Bust of Tom's left hand holding check, right hand grasping glass, focusing the glass upon the name signed to the check. This shows that the name has been written in a very shaky hand.

11—Back to 9—

Tom lays reading-glass on desk, looks at his brother accusingly, and then thrusts check close to his face.

against Ralph, kneeling and peering into the room through the key-hole. This is a very short scene, but it is necessary to show two things: not only that the brothers are being spied upon, for we are not interested in merely watching the butler kneeling there, but it is important for us to see *what* he is watching so intently—the action in the library. So, after we have shown the spy kneeling outside the door, the scene is shifted back to the continuation of the interview between Tom and Ralph. This time, however, we see it on the screen in a way that merely *suggests* the butler kneeling outside the closed door. On the screen appears a large key-hole, and within its limits the scene between the brothers is acted.

The effect thus produced is termed a "mask." Ordinarily the lens of a moving picture camera is masked by a metal plate, rectangular in shape, one inch wide by three-quarters of an inch high. The use of this mask prevents the light from spreading up or down the film as it is being exposed. As explained in Chapter III, each of the sixteen tiny pictures that make up a foot of film is termed a "frame," and, the camera being masked as described, the light is permitted to act upon only one frame at a time. But within this limit of one inch by three-quarters of an inch another mask may be used, cut in any form that the producer may desire. It may be a key-hole mask, as in the foregoing example; it may be simply circular, to suggest that the scene is viewed through a telescope; or a mask with hair-line bars, which will suggest that you are looking through a window. We examined a script

a short while ago in which a travelling salesman for an optical goods house amused himself in the interval before train time by watching through a pair of binoculars the street below and the buildings opposite his hotel window. The scene enacted in an office of a building not far away led him to believe that a murder was being committed, and the action which followed was extremely funny. The scene in the office, watched by the "drummer" through the binoculars, appeared on the screen as though viewed through a large and very round figure eight, lying on its side, thus:

The four just mentioned are the commonest forms of the mask; but we have seen masks cut in the shape of oak leaves, bottles, and other forms, though these latter were used merely to obtain novel effects.

The mask may be used as an inserted scene—as we have here chiefly considered it—or it may serve as a sort of excuse for the entire action of the photoplay, as in the case of the commercial traveller and his binoculars, and add effectiveness by its novelty of presentation.

12. The Bust and the Close-up

In former usage, the term "bust" was employed to describe any enlarged view, as a watch, a face, a hand turning a door knob. Now the term has been given a less wide range and has been superseded in its broadest meaning by another technical expression—the "close-up."

The bust now means any enlarged *object*, such as a hand holding a watch, a box of cigars on a table with

against Ralph, kneeling and peering into the room through the key-hole. This is a very short scene, but it is necessary to show two things: not only that the brothers are being spied upon, for we are not interested in merely watching the butler kneeling there, but it is important for us to see *what* he is watching so intently—the action in the library. So, after we have shown the spy kneeling outside the door, the scene is shifted back to the continuation of the interview between Tom and Ralph. This time, however, we see it on the screen in a way that merely *suggests* the butler kneeling outside the closed door. On the screen appears a large key-hole, and within its limits the scene between the brothers is acted.

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The bust now means any enlarged *object,* such as a hand holding a watch, a box of cigars on a table with

a note pinned to a cigar, or any object shown close to the camera, *where no action is called for.*

If Maud comes into a room and sees her sister staring at the window sill, crosses to the sister's side and stares also, it is natural that we wonder what it is that causes the consternation. The camera is manifestly too far away to show unmistakably what Maud picks up—say, a broken-off knife-point. Suppose that it is part of the plot to have the spectator also grasp the fact that there is a dark stain on the knife-point. We must get it closer. So we write the scene up to the point where Maud holds up the object, then we start another scene and say:

43—Bust of Maud's hand holding knife-point to show blood-stain in shape of rude star.

There is no action. The hand simply holds the object. A scene of this kind is usually taken before a black curtain or in front of some such indeterminate background. Later, this bust scene is inserted into the film at the proper point. A point worthy of notice is that bust scenes are always taken, and close-up scenes are *nearly* always taken, either before or (usually) after the scenes into which they break have been done. If the plot demands that a certain character examine his watch at a certain point, and if the spectator is supposed to see exactly what time the watch shows, the director is not going to stop his camera, bring the camera nearer to the player or the player nearer to the camera, as his method may be, make the bust pic-

ture, and then resume the taking of the "wide-angle," or full-size-stage, scene. Much time can be saved by making the *different kinds* of scenes separately. This explains why every scene and every kind of scene in the entire scenario *must* be given a separate scene-number. The scenes in a photoplay may be likened to a cut-up picture puzzle, each part of which must be properly assembled and inserted in its proper place to make a complete, understandable picture.

As has already been said, the bust picture in photoplay is like the spot-light in the regular theatre. It centres the spectator's attention on a certain object and holds it there until the important object is fully observed by the watcher. It "not only magnifies the objects, but it draws particular attention to them. Many points may be cleared in a five-foot bust picture which would require twenty to thirty feet of leader to explain, and the bust picture always interests. Sometimes in a newspaper illustration a circle surrounds some point of interest, or a cross marks where the body was discovered. The bust picture serves the same purpose, and answers, as well, for the descriptive caption that appears under a cut." [1]

Bear in mind, then, that the introduction of a bust scene makes the succeeding portion of the action in that setting *another scene,* with its own consecutive number.

In the past few years, the number of scenes to the reel has been almost doubled, in most studios; and

[1] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *The Technique of the Photoplay.*

this is due to the increased use of the close-up. The bust and the close-up are entirely separate in their utility and effect, yet, properly used, each has been found a valuable addition to the technical devices of photoplay construction. It is now frequently the practice of many directors to bring the camera nearer to a certain character, or group of characters, at some important point of the action for the sake of emphasizing facial expression or certain bits of "business" that are vitally essential to a proper understanding of the plot.

This may be accomplished in three different ways—the method employed always depending upon the nature of the scene as well as of *the setting or location.* First, if the surroundings of the character at that stage of the action are important as having something to do with the "business" being carried out—if, for example, it is necessary to show, at close range, the actions of two characters who are seated at a table—the director has the camera moved down toward them, and that particular close-up, or series of close-ups, is taken usually, as has been said, after all the wide-angle scenes in that setting have been "done," for the obvious purpose of rendering unnecessary the frequent shifting of the camera.

If, on the other hand, the director merely wishes to emphasize at certain points in any scene the facial expression of his players, as affected by the humorous, startling, or other emotional "business" incidental to the plot at that point, and if the surroundings of the character or characters may be indeterminate without detracting from the value of the scene, the player or

players may be brought *nearer to the camera,* and the close-up may even be made with the subjects posed against a plain, dark background. This method of obtaining the close-up is frequently resorted to, and, it may be said, is not always truly "artistic," if seriously considered, inasmuch as it tends to detach the character from the surroundings of the scene, and make the result more than ever in the nature of a figure in the spotlight. We have seen many pictures, particularly those with female "stars" featured—as, for example, the Mary Pickford pictures—in which the action of a scene would be broken several times, and the head of the pretty "star" shown photographed against a plain, very dark background.

The third method used in the studios is one which actually changes a wide-angle view into a close-up without breaking or interrupting the action in the slightest degree. This is accomplished by mounting the camera on a specially built platform on wheels—on a truck—which as a rule is operated on wooden tracks previously prepared to suit the action taking place in that set or location. Take for example the Babylonian setting (the principal Babylonian setting, that is) in the D. W. Griffith production, "Intolerance." When this scene is first thrown on the screen we see an immense open court, surrounded by banquet halls and long corridors, with walls reaching up to tremendous heights, the walls themselves banked with huge figures of heathen gods and images and great elephants, compared to which the human figures participating in the scene are mere pygmies. At the back of this enormous

have been, in the photoplay form, actually introduced, and thus added to the cast. But the point is that there is no longer the frantic striving to keep everything as "short and simple as possible" that once existed, and this applies to everything in the nature of inserts quite as much as to the names used for characters in the picture. Little by little "art" in motion picture production is becoming a reality instead of being merely a high-sounding word used occasionally by the press-agents.

8. Describing the Characters

Since there is no restriction placed upon the way in which a cast of characters is made out, the writer may choose between the simple statement-form, when giving the names of his characters, and that in which the appearance and dominant traits of the character are set forth. You can say:

Silas Gregory, a miser,

or you can draw a picture of the man himself in the very way you describe him, thus:

Silas Gregory, an extremely wealthy and eccentric miser; a bachelor and a man who both by his appearance and his nature repels the friendship of his fellow men; inclined to practice petty cruelty on children and animals; suspicious of and seeming to hate everybody except his old body-servant, Daniels, to whom he is strangely attached.

While the foregoing is a rather long description of a character to be included as part of the cast-outline,

over and over again, both in fiction and in photoplay. But unusual names are desirable too, provided they fit the characters. The work of an amateur writer can almost always be told by the names he gives his characters.

In the writing of photoplays, where the author has no description to rely on to explain who and what his characters are, there is especial need of names that will help to indicate the social status of his different characters. In real life, a bank president is as likely to be a Casey or a Smith as he is to be a Rutherford or a Pendleton, but the chances are that, when given to a great banker, either of the last two names would make a greater impression on "popular" spectators. Again, certain names instantly make us think of villainy, while others as plainly tell us that the owner of the name is an honest man. The authors of the "good old" melodramas used exaggerated names that today would probably be laughed at. "Jack Manly" and "Desmond Dangerfield" would hardly "get by" in modern drama or in present-day picture plays; but the idea of appropriateness that was responsible for such names being used is what is needed by photoplaywrights who desire to name their characters convincingly. Percy certainly does not suggest a prize-fighter, any more than Miriam portrays a cook.

By all means keep a special notebook in which to jot down new and unusual names to fit characters of every nationality and of every station in life, *but try to get names that are short and easily pronounced.* Very few photoplaywrights adhere to only one line of

sees the object lying on the floor, and, slowly, his hands go up over his eyes.

46—Close-up of Maud and Ethel. Maud slowly turns to her sister with a question in her eyes—"Is he guilty?"—and bows her head, then looks up quickly and fixes her gaze on Frank.

47—Close-up of Frank. With agony in his eyes, the boy protests his innocence. Suddenly he pauses, realizing that he is not making an impression.

48—Back to wide-angle of room.

Both sisters are staring at Frank. Maud's look is one of unmistakable accusation. She looks down at the floor. Frank follows her gaze. Maud stoops, picks up the knife-point, and holds it out towards him. He slowly advances and takes it from her. He knows what they expect—what they demand! Slowly, hesitatingly, he draws a pocket knife out of his pocket. The sisters come closer, drawn magnetically by the horrible thing they fear to see—the meeting of the knife and the broken point.

49—Close-up of Frank. A very close view to show him slowly opening the knife, the point of which is broken off. The other hand puts the blood-stained point to the broken blade. They match! They fit absolutely!

50—Back to wide-angle of room.

With an anguished face the boy cries;

Leader—"I DIDN'T!—OH! WON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?"

Back to scene.

He sees a hardening of Maud's face. Silently his hands unclench; the knife-point falls to the table. Then, with an access of fear, he closes his knife, thrusts it into his pocket, and rushes wildly out, while the two girls merely stare after him, too horror-stricken to move, to follow.

The foregoing is a good example of how "straight" action, all in one uninterrupted wide-angle scene, would not be half so convincing, dramatic or suspense-holding as the broken-up series of scenes, all in the same setting, all in the one situation. Incidentally, Scene 49 shows very clearly the distinction between the bust and the close-up. This is a very close view of the boy's hands, but it cannot be called a bust because of the fact that it is an action scene. The close-up compares with the bust in much the same way that any painting with supposedly human, moving figures compares with those pictures which come under the "still life" classification.

This illustration of the use of the bust and the close-up is taken from an actual script, prepared by one of the Vitagraph Company's staff writers. It will be noticed that the "description" of the scene following the bust scene is "44—Back to wide-angle of room," instead of "44—Back to 42," which it would have been had this Vitagraph writer followed the same rules of technique as were used by the writer of the script from which the example on page 159 was taken. The Vitagraph writer follows the same rule in writing the description of close-up scenes, also.

story is not readily understood on a first reading and never passes to a second perusal. Take pains with your literary baptisms."

It seems scarcely necessary to point out that it is both easier and better to call the young people by whatever Christian name you decide to give them and to refer to their elders by their last name. You can say Freeman or Mr. Freeman, when speaking of Jess's father, but do not say that Tom and Miss Freeman are discovered by her father making love. Simply say Tom and Jess. If Jess's father is a farmer or a miner, it may seem more natural to say Freeman, or Jess's father. If he is a banker or a stock broker, you may choose to speak of him as Mr. Freeman. The most important thing is to make the name, as clearly as possible, suggest the age, rank, and general characteristics of the person to whom it is given.

A good deal has been written concerning the advisability of using only short and simple names for most characters in the photoplay. Others have advised photoplay authors to try to discover unhackneyed names for their characters. There are, of course, hundreds of short and appropriate "first" names for people of different nationalities; the trouble, especially with amateur writers, is that such names as Tom, Jack, Jim, and Charley, and May, Mary, Grace, Ethel, and Kate, are used over and over again, and without any regard to the surname which follows them. Simple and common names *are* desirable, so long as they really fit the characters who bear them. John and Tom and Mary and Kate are names that will be used

inner workings of the studios do not realize is that although Scene 10, let us say, is "done" on one day, Scene 11 may not be taken until the following day, or even a week later. It frequently happens that one set is allowed to stand for several days, on account of "re-takes" that have been found necessary, or because a director has difficulty in obtaining a certain lighting effect. In such cases certain players are required to play the same part over and over again, even though between the "re-takes" they may "work" for other directors in the same studio.

6. Actual Work on the Cast

You will probably find that the best and easiest way to prepare your cast of characters is to keep a rough list of all the people who take part in the action, as you write the scenario. Because, of course, although the cast of characters is the second division of the script, it should have its final preparation after the scenario has been completed, for the same reason that the synopsis is also finally prepared when the scenario has been finished.

Keep a sheet of paper beside you as you write your scenario. First put down the names of all your *principal* characters so as to have them before your eyes as you write. Then as you work out your scenario, scene after scene, set down every character introduced; for example, if you use a doctor, who merely pays one visit to a patient appearing in only one scene, set down the following on your memorandum sheet:

except in very obvious cases. You see, I am now speaking as a producer as well as a writer. The value of the close-up almost always is governed in practice by floor conditions. I mean by this several things. For one thing, if the cast is not the ideal cast you have had in mind when writing the play the character you have set down for a close-up may not be able to express what it is essential to express in that particular close-up. The producer must then find some other means of punctuating the situation. For another thing, no producer is likely to build a set and handle his people in it in exactly the way you have conceived. For that matter, no two producers are likely to handle the set and the characters in the same way. It follows that very often the producer can secure a natural close-up in the course of the action where you have called for a special close-up scene. And on the other hand the producer may find that he needs a special close-up scene at a point where your conception of the movements of the characters has not made it appear necessary. Anyhow, the close-up is an interpretation. If, as I hold, the producer is an interpreter, would it not be better to leave this matter of close-ups to him, and write your scene straight, with emphasis on the points that should be brought out most strongly? I don't say that this surmise is right; I merely am wondering. In any event, we do not want to see the close-up overdone. We don't want too much of the Griffith staccato. It leads to what a certain friend of mine once called Tom Lawson's method of muck-raking—'The method of universal emphasis.'"

It is interesting to note in the first paragraph of the quotation from Mr. Merwin's letter that he advocates giving, in most pictures, "the first few hundred feet" to a proper introduction of the characters and to laying the foundation, as it were, for the story proper. This is in marked contrast to the method of a few years ago, when one-reel pictures were the rule, and when very little footage could be spared for such introductory scenes. Today, with very much longer pictures, there is no excuse for any writer's ever feeling himself cramped for room in which to make clear everything that the spectator ought to know in connection with his characters and his plot.

Finally, in connection with the *story,* as written by you, and the *picture,* as put on by the director, we again quote Mr. Sargent:

"If you *need* a close-up, write it in, numbering it as a separate scene. If you do not need a close-up, don't write one in, even though you see innumerable close-ups used. Let the director make these as his fancy or judgment may dictate. He can see just where and how the use of the close-up can help the *pictorial* quality of the picture. You are apt to concern yourself only with the narrative value of the close-up, employing it only where it is necessary in order to get the *story* over clearly. You cannot possibly imagine the scene exactly as it will be set up or played, therefore you cannot tell where and how *pictorial* close-ups or other effects will be useful. Leave that to the director and he will handle the numbering according to his special system. Number *your own* close-ups,

how they are disposed towards each other, will grasp the points of the plot more quickly. Remember that the motives actuating the different characters are virtually sure to be the very foundations of a photoplay plot.

Almost everyone has sat half through a photoplay which was perfect in all other respects, but far from pleasing because it left the spectators guessing for minutes as to "who's who."

"Keep your first characters on the screen, even though in different scenes, long enough to get everyone familiar with them and their environment in the story before introducing a new and unexpected phase in the tale. To fail in this is faulty construction." [1]

3. Prompt Beginning of the Action

A common mistake among amateur photoplaywrights is to waste far too much time on preliminaries. If a guest is expected from a distant city, all that is necessary, as a rule, is to write in a short letter, which is opened and read by the host- or hostess-to-be, announcing that the guest will arrive at a certain time. But the young writer—to judge from many scripts we have examined—thinks that in such a case it is necessary to show the housemaid preparing the guest-chamber, another scene in which the hostess instructs the chauffeur to be ready at such an hour to meet her guest at the station, and so on. No matter what kind of story you are writing, go straight to the point from

[1] Herbert Case Hoagland: *How to Write a Photoplay.*

CHAPTER X

THE SCENARIO OR CONTINUITY

The first step in the preparation of the scenario—or continuity of scenes—is not a step at all—it is a state of mind: the mood of visualization.

1. The Picture Eye

No matter how easy it may be for you to write a clear, brief and interesting synopsis of your story, nor how successful you may be in drawing up your cast of characters, you will fail in producing the right kind of scenario to accompany them until you acquire or cultivate the picturing eye. To possess it is simply to be able to visualize your story as you write it—yes, even before you write it. You must not only write that "Hal Murdoch steals his employer's letter-book so as to find out some important facts," but you must yourself first *see* him do it, just as you expect to see it on the screen. On the regular stage, the "business" of the actors—important as it is—is nevertheless of secondary consideration; dialogue comes first. On the photoplay stage it is just the reverse—at all times it is action that is of primary importance. It is what your characters do that counts. Leaders, letters, and other inserts help to make clear what you are trying to convey to the audience, but for a proper understanding and interpretation of your plot the spectators depend

finger at Harding." Or, if Tom is in the city and has reason to believe that Frank, back on the farm, is taking advantage of his friend's absence to win his sweetheart away from him, write the scene down to the point where Tom straightens up in his office chair and stares (perhaps directly into the camera) with a worried expression, and then say: "Vision-in portion of the apple orchard, with Frank making love to Mary as they stand beneath one of the trees."

Everyone who has attended the motion picture theatres has seen dozens of examples of "visions," produced in one or another manner, and it should be easy to distinguish between "visions" and "thoughts" or "memories." The latter *may* be introduced as part of another scene just as the vision (using the word in the sense of "apparition" or "supernatural visitant") is introduced; but it must be borne in mind that the photoplay spectators have in the past few years been gradually educated up to a rather perfect comprehension of what results different technical devices produce—even if they do not quite understand the technical why and wherefore; and for this reason it is best when writing action in which the characters are supposed to show what they are thinking about or describing to use the fade-out and fade-in device, as the meaning of this is now very clearly understood. The spectators are quite used to seeing the picture fade out, or "go black" at the end of certain scenes, just as they are familiar with the use of it at the actual end of the photoplay. Apart from these two uses, they have come to associate the fade-out with the thought

of the immediate introduction of a "memory," either related to others or silently indulged in, or a mere thought, or, if the character is seen going to sleep, of a "dream."

If the fade-out is used, it means three scenes instead of one, of course, because following the introduction of the "memory," or whatever it may be, you return to the scene proper, just as you go back to the wide-angle view after using a bust or a close-up scene. They would be numbered, for example, 17, 18 and 19, and you would write the action as follows:

17—Library, same as 6.

Fenton continues to make love to Beverly, presently ending what he is saying with an impassioned plea to fly with him at once. For just a moment she seems on the point of yielding; then she starts back and shows that she is thinking of what it would mean. (Fade out into—)

18—Bedroom, same as 8.

Dean, lying in bed, wakes up and calls out, as if calling to his wife. Then he falls back again on the pillow, exhausted. (Fade back to—)

19—Back to 17.

Fenton reaches out to grasp Beverly's hand, but she draws quickly back and urges him to stop pleading with her, at the same time crossing etc.

If you are using the "dissolve" or "interpose" (see definitions in Chapter III) you introduce the device in the same way as above; but bear in mind that the dissolve is somewhat harder to accomplish than the

THE SOPHOMORE'S SURPRISE

by

X Y Z

TED CARSON	President of the Freshman class at College; twenty, blonde, bright, athletic, full of gay spirits.
FAY NORTON	The college co-ed beauty, inclined to love Ted, who loves her.
NITA CARSON	Ted's twin sister; a freshman co-ed, in love with Hal Coates.
HAL COATES	President of the Sophomore class; twenty-four, dark; athletic rival of Ted, whom he looks down upon. A college leader; lover of Nita.
DAN WILLIS	Ted's chum; a slim and mischievous Freshman.
"BUCK" SLAGLE	Hal's chum; an unprincipled Sophomore.
DEAN HALL	A nervous professor; comedy character.
POLICEMAN	In 16, 17 and 18.
STUDENTS	Throughout.
WAITERS	In 16, 17 and 18.
CO-EDS	In 4, 6, 7, 10, 13 and 17.

and while some of the points in connection with Gregory's nature could be more forcibly demonstrated by having him *do* little things in the action that would make them apparent, the point is that you are supplying these items of information for the benefit of the editor and the director, and that, as must be apparent, the fuller their understanding of your meaning in everything you write, the better will be their interpretation and production of your story.

It is very important to keep this point constantly in mind. Seldom is it today that the cast appears on the screen exactly as prepared by the author. Almost all the big companies at the present time are given to long sub-titles, and to lengthy statements in connection with the introduction of the principal characters. Many readers will see the similarity between the second of the foregoing descriptions of the old miser and the printed statement, in connection with a similar character, shown in the Triangle and Paramount pictures written by C. Gardner Sullivan, as well as in many others. The statement on the film which introduces a principal character, today, is much more in the nature of an actual leader than it is a mere announcement of the names of the character and the player. Thus, in Universal's feature production of "The Kaiser," the heroic blacksmith of Louvain was introduced in this way:

> Marcas, the blacksmith of Louvain, was a mighty man. This man, Marcas, lived in faith and love and friendship, and, by the sweat of his brow, had won peace and happiness.

York, seeking to injure the cause of the Allies and lay the blame on the American 'longshoremen at the same time, arrange to have a train of freight cars, crossing on barges from Manhattan to Jersey, dumped into the North River by removing the means by which they are held in place on the tracks of the barge and "letting 'em slide." The effect on the screen is wonderfully like what a long-range photograph of such an actual event would show. All that was needed to produce the scene was a tank of water with a miniature barge pushed along by a tiny tug-boat, the latter steaming up very realistically. When the toy barge and tug-boat were right in the middle of the "stage," three or four toy freight cars were allowed to slide off into the water. Above the tank, as a background, was hung some white or light colored cloth, making everything from the waterline up a white blank. Against this blank was superimposed, by running the film through the camera twice, a picture of the New York sky-line as seen from the Jersey shore. The unruffled surface of the water in the tank—so unlike the wavy North River—was almost the only thing to show certain of the spectators that the scene was not the real thing. In another episode of the same serial, after the German spies have caused an Allied grain ship to be loaded on one side only, so that she will turn turtle as soon as released from her moorings, another very realistic scene shows the ship actually turning over, as much as the comparative narrowness of the slip will let her, after they have cut the ropes holding her to the dock. Here, again, a model vessel in a built-up

miniature slip supplied the means of obtaining a startlingly realistic effect. The scene lasted only a few seconds, so that little opportunity was given the spectator to see how it was worked, but the effect of the brief scene was very convincing.

In scores of feature productions models or miniatures of various kinds have been resorted to to obtain startling or novel effects, and have saved the outlay of thousands of dollars in the production of certain pictures. Double photography, or superimposure, is a ready ally, when the director wants to get an effect showing a specially arranged fictitious scene played against a real and frequently well-known background, as in the North River scene just described. In the same picture, "The Eagle's Eye," the Whartons, who produced it, displayed a new feature in photography—a genuine photographic device rather than a trick—in what they described as "the triple iris"—three diaphragms opening at once and disclosing the heads of Boy-Ed, Von Papen and Dr. Albert, and then fading and showing a scene in which these three characters were seen grouped in conversation.

Another effect which might, perhaps, be classed as a trick was used in the Mary Pickford feature, "Amarilly of Clothes-line Alley." It was in reality merely a clever scene intended to take the place of a leader, while being also an improvement on a leader because of the fact that to almost everyone in the audience it instantly "put over" the idea back of the action at that point of the story. At the time that Amarilly's good-hearted but socially impossible mother, with her little

brothers and sisters, are being entertained by the rich hostess who desires to shame the little girl from the tenements in the eyes of her son, there is flashed on the screen, against a dark background, an empty glass gold-fish bowl with the fish themselves wriggling and gasping on the table beside it. The idea of "fish out of water" was very apparent to the spectators. Later, when the tenement-bred family had returned to their humble home, another picture showed the gold-fish contentedly swimming about in a well-filled bowl. It is such an effect as this that any clever writer might think of suggesting in his scenario, and it is legitimate in every way—far more so, in fact, than some of the tricks of diaphragming and fading so frequently made use of by certain directors.

A startlingly novel effect was shown some time ago in the Vitagraph Company's production of Arthur Stringer's story, "Mortmain." Just as Mortmain was put under ether the scene proper faded out, giving place to a dull blur in which the faces of the doctor and his attendants were brought right up to the lens of the camera and then withdrawn for several feet, the action being extremely rapid, and being repeated several times, by means of the camera mounted on a truck, as already described. This was accompanied by another dark-background strip of film, across—or rather down—which shot fiery streaks, like the tails of discharging sky-rockets. The whole effect of anæsthesia was vividly reproduced, and the effect on the audience was most marked. The idea of what Mortmain experienced in his last conscious moments "got

across" in no uncertain way. Especially startling and realistic—to those who have been there—was the effect of the patient's feeling himself dropping, dropping, dropping through space into—oblivion.

It is extremely unlikely that this work will be made use of by anyone who has not visited the picture theatres often enough to have seen ten times as many camera tricks, special effects, and examples of the use of different technical devices as are herein described. But if you *are* taking up photoplay writing without having seen many photoplays on the screen, you are but half equipped, notwithstanding all the help you may receive through text-books and trade-journal articles. In other words, we urge upon you the wisdom of keeping in mind that the real finishing school for screen writers is the picture theatre itself.

15. Dual-Character Double Exposures

Undoubtedly, the gradual perfecting of the double exposure (superimposure) device in motion-picture making has made possible the screening of innumerable good stories which would otherwise have been almost impossible of production. When only a few years ago the Vitagraph Company made their very creditable production of Charles Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities," the two leading male characters, Sidney Carton and Charles Darnley, were played by two different actors—the final action of the plot turning on the fact that these two were "doubles," for this fact makes possible Sidney Carton's supreme sacrifice for his friend and the woman he loves. There was a fairly

close facial resemblance between the two actors who played these parts—enough, with the aid of the wigs they wore and other make-up, to make the picture convincing. Today, no director would think of putting on such a picture with two different actors in the dual roles of Carton and Darnley. When, in 1917, the Dickens classic was released as a William Fox feature, William Farnum played both rôles, and some really remarkable results were obtained in scenes where both characters were present at the same time. Almost everyone has seen pictures containing examples of the possibilities offered by double exposure in making pictures of this nature.

In the first place, when two characters are supposed to be "doubles," it is certainly more convincing to have one player portray both rôles. Again, any additional trouble that is attached to making pictures of this kind, on account of the double exposures involved, is confined to those scenes in which both characters are present in the scene at the same time, and even then the difficulty is minimized by the use of close-ups.

For example, to show Carton in one scene where Darnley is not present is simply to take an ordinary scene in an ordinary way. Then, suppose you wish to show Carton seated in a chair at one side of the room while Darnley leaning against the table at the other side of the room talks with him. In pictures of this kind the director frequently uses more close-ups than usual merely to avoid the necessity of making double exposures, in connection with which the greatest trouble is always the keeping track—by counting, for

instance—of the moves of the two different characters. But it is a much easier matter for the dual-rôle actor, made up as Carton, to be photographed singly in one part of the room as he goes through with the action of one or more scenes, after which, dressed as Darnley, he goes through the synchronized action of that character. Synchronization—or harmony of movement in time—of course demands that the action of both characters be properly matched—to use a common and easily understood term—but it will be seen that when the spectator watches only one character at a time there is not the need for the *perfect* synchronization of action that is always demanded of the wide-angle double-exposure scene, in which one man, playing two different characters, must face himself and keep the action natural and convincing at all times.

Very few things in the development of motion picture art have advanced so noticeably as this trick of portraying dual characters on the screen by means of double exposure of the film. Theoretically, it is extremely simple. There is a middle—or at any rate an arbitrary—dividing line to the stage. A mask being placed over one-half of the camera lens, the film is run through and the action of Carton in a certain scene in which he is supposed to face Darnley is taken. Careful track is kept of just what important moves he makes at different stages of the count. Later, after he is made up as Darnley, the first half of the lens is masked in the same way as before, while the second half is exposed and the action of Darnley is gone through with, with the gestures and other action prop-

erly timed to synchronize with the action of his "double"—and that is all there is to do. But the skill of the director is tested in his timing of the moves of the characters, just as his knowledge of lighting and backgrounds is tested so as to avoid showing the line where the two differently exposed parts of the film join. Then, too, certain directors have, of late, procured some "double" effects which well deserve to be called wonderful, as when in a certain William Fox film the two different characters, played by the one woman, are made to meet and kiss each other most naturally.

To repeat, double exposure (to use the simplest term for this camera trick) has made possible the writing of many stories for the screen which a few years ago would have been rejected because of the inability of the company to procure two people similar enough in appearance successfully to portray the "doubles." No author with a really fine idea for a dual-character story need hesitate to offer it to the film companies today. But there is still enough additional trouble attached to the production of this kind of story to justify the editors in rejecting everything but the very best in the way of plots.

16. Features

The most surprising thing, when one looks back and considers the single-reel stories of a few years ago, is that a complete, logically told story could ever have been produced in one thousand feet of film, part of which was consumed by sub-titles and inserts. Of

course, the sub-titles and inserts *helped* to tell the story in those days, just as they do now, but even so, the comparatively small amount of footage allowed to each picture seems even less than it actually was in the light of the five- to eight-thousand feet and more to which we expect feature pictures to run today.

The fact remains, however, that for several years one-reel pictures were the rule; and a still more important fact, considered from the standpoint of the writer, is that many—a great many—of the stories that were then confined to one thousand feet of film were far better *stories,* if not quite so pleasing as *pictures,* than many that are now being put out in lengths of five-thousand feet or more and labeled as features.

The reason is clear; there simply could not be a clearer or more undeniable reason: When a story had to be told in one thousand feet—perhaps a few feet less than that, but never a foot more—it had to be *all story,* all meat. "Padding" was a thing quite unknown in 1909. The wonder was that so much story could be crowded into so few feet of film. Good as was the Famous Players five-reel production of Dumas' "Monte Cristo"—judged by the standards of the year in which it was released—a great many people who saw it were struck by the fact that this feature production had very little more actual story in it than had the carefully condensed one-reel version of the same novel-play that was put out by the Selig Company in 1908. What it did have was more detail, and a great deal more opportunity for pictorial effects. The one-reel Selig release gave every essential detail of the

romance, with the necessary explanatory inserts in the way of leaders, letters, etc. The Famous Players feature production gave the essential details plus innumerable details that were by no means essential—although very effective as helps to a better understanding of the locale, the period in history, and the author's characterization.

The Famous Players "Monte Cristo," however, was not, at any point, "padded." It might have been two reels longer—and probably would have been three reels longer had it been produced a little later—without giving too much of the wealth of picture-material contained in the complete story of Edmond Dantes. We mention these two pictures solely for the purpose of drawing a comparison between the kind of stories put out in 1908 and those that were beginning to appear about six years later. But "padding"—the filling up of the picture with non-essential and often very extraneous details or pictorial effects—has steadily increased with the yearly increase of the so-called "features," and has unquestionably been responsible for the falling-off in interest among countless former photoplay "fans." They have gone into the theatres expecting to see a "big star" in a "big story"—and have come out after having seen only the "big star." Just who is responsible for this very unsatisfactory state of affairs it is sometimes hard to say. Occasionally the story, if written by an "outside" writer, is lacking in plot-material in the first place, and, having been purchased on account of its having, none the less, several good situations, is allowed to go into produc-

tion without being built up in plot (which is quite another thing from "padding") by one of the studio staff-writers. Or it may be that, the logical length of that particular story being five thousand feet, the director lets it run on for another reel, or even two, in order to be able to work in several hundred feet of quite unnecessary close-ups of the female "lead," who chances to be his wife, and whose popularity he is naturally anxious to maintain. This actually has happened; but even a conscientious and otherwise artistic director may occasionally "stretch a picture out a little" in order to take advantage of the beautiful natural locations of the part of the country in which he is working.

All these things being so, it becomes more and more the duty of the author to see that his story *has* plenty of *story*. Give the director a strong, well-developed plot and he will have far less opportunity and much less excuse for introducing anything that will be in the nature of padding. Moreover, so evident is it that photoplay audiences have come to recognize the padded story when one is shown, that the producers have started to call a halt on this foolish practice, and as a result stories accepted from the outside are closely scrutinized to see if they are full length in actual material.

So far as any special rules in connection with the writing of the feature picture is concerned, there are really none—unless the admonition to try to make a five-reel story five times as interesting and five times as cleverly plotted as a one-reel story may be called a

rule. In other words, the writer who can turn out a salable synopsis for a one-reel story ought to be able to write an equally good synopsis for a five-reel feature; and similarly, if you can write the continuity for a one-reel story—if you can write a single-reel scenario of the kind that would have been acceptable in any studio a few years ago—you undoubtedly can write a five-reel continuity that is up to the technical standard demanded by those companies that accept complete scripts today. And of course the same applies to the "synopsis only" script.

The one thing that you cannot do, unless you are actually on the staff of a certain company, is obvious, and has been referred to in the chapter on "The Synopsis": You cannot write any story with the certainty that it will be entirely unchanged after being accepted for production. Any one of a dozen very good reasons may demand that some alteration, addition to or elimination of certain scenes or parts of scenes in your story must take place while it is in the director's hands. There is a vast difference between the necessary changes carefully made by an artistic and painstaking director and the indiscriminate slashing to pieces of a writer's story common among a certain variety of directors in the past. Fortunately for the writer, this class of director is rapidly being outlawed, and the photoplaywright should write at all times in the confident belief that his perfect-as-he-can-make-it story will be adequately "put on" by a director who knows his business and is, as Mr. Merwin says, an interpreter of the author's plot.

We need only repeat here one other thing that we said in Chapter VIII: No matter what the length of the story, today, it is always run through—in all but the very smallest and most out-of-the-way theatres and towns respectively—without interruption, because two projecting machines are used, and another reel is started as soon as one finishes, there being no perceptible break in the action on the screen. For this reason, if you are writing a five-reel feature-story with, say, forty scenes to a reel, you start with Scene 1 and number straight through to Scene 200. There should be a series of rising climaxes, but no special forward-looking climax exactly at the end of each thousand feet.

Also, of course, it is quite unnecessary to have an equal number of scenes to each part. The action of your first reel—more or less introductory—may demand only thirty or thirty-five scenes, whereas when your story gets to moving rapidly you may see the necessity for running up the number of scenes by introducing several short scenes, or "flashes."

17. Serials

We advise a rereading of the definition of the term "serials" given in Chapter III. In addition to what is there said, it may be stated that, as a rule, it is best not to write a complete serial—even though only in synopsis form—unless you have what is beyond question a sure market. As a matter of fact, most serials are written at present by big-name writers of fiction—such as Arthur B. Reeve—or "inside" writers, such as

George B. Seitz, who has been responsible for several successful Pathé serials. The comparatively few "outside" writers who have "made good" with serials follow the plan of writing the synopsis of the first four or five episodes (which in film form would mean eight or ten reels), which they submit for the editor's approval in the regular way. If the editor likes the idea, or theme, of the story, and thinks it would make a successful picture, he will commission you to finish it. Four or five episodes of well-planned, suspense-holding plot will be sufficient to assure him that you are capable of keeping up the same speed and making the story consistently interesting all through.

To reiterate what was also pointed out in the definition in Chapter III, you must bear in mind that while the end of each separate reel in an ordinary feature need not end with a forward-looking climax, the end of each *episode* in a photoplay serial ***must*** be a climax of a most thrilling nature, or, at any rate, must be such a climax as will greatly excite the interest of the spectator and insure his coming to the theatre when the next episode is shown. The serial photoplay is exactly like the well-written and carefully edited serial story of fiction. Judged from the box-office viewpoint, the supreme test of a good photoplay serial is its ability to keep the same spectators coming to the theatre where it is being run week after week.

What has been said as to the thrilling climax at the end of each episode, or chapter, must not be interpreted as meaning that a mere thrilling *situation* is all that is required. In the boys' story-papers of a few

years ago, referred to in our discussion of the cut-back, the hero was frequently left hanging over the edge of the cliff, or tied to the railroad track, or waiting for the timed fuse to reach the keg of powder. These situations in themselves were sufficient to make juvenile readers wait anxiously for seven whole days in order to find out what would happen "in our next." It has been demonstrated, however, that what holds the attention of the photoplay spectator, young or old, is the mystery connected with the story, and it is the solving of this mystery that must constantly be kept in mind. "Who is the masked stranger?" "Who is the owner of the mysterious clutching hand," "Who is the mysterious and ominous personage who inevitably sends a telephone message of warning when about to strike down a new victim?" These are the questions that keep them guessing from week to week and draw them back to witness every episode. Your climax may be a thrilling situation—should be, in fact—but it must also be a definite way-station on the journey to the point of discovery.

While there is still a great deal of absolute nonsense—viewed from any standpoint of common sense and logic—in most photoplay serials, and while the long-drawn-out mystery is often made possible only by the introduction of weird and unnatural happenings not even possible in real life, there is now a tendency toward serials more true to life and more dependent for their success upon plots that will stand the acid test of logical reasoning. The very fact that each separate episode, with its various situations in the

working out of the mystery, had to be depended upon to draw the crowds back again to see the next episode, was taken as sufficient excuse for the introduction of situations that would make the wildest exploits of "Diamond Dick" or "Old King Brady" read like the Sunday-school stories of a generation ago.

The Wharton serial, "The Eagle's Eye," already referred to, was the first in which historical facts were reproduced in their logical order, held together and made more interesting by a veneer of fiction. The fictional head of the Criminology Club and the daring woman Secret Service operative seemed almost to be secondary characters compared to the much-talked-about agents of the Imperial German Government whose nefarious acts made so much trouble for the American detectives and Secret Service agents headed by ex-Chief Flynn, under whose supervision the serial was made.

The future holds out immense possibilities for producers and writers of thoroughly good photoplay serials. Whereas in the past many serials were to be seen only in the second-rate houses, on account of the fact that their impossibly thrilling situations and weird plots appealed only to the juvenile and less intelligent spectators, now with the improvement in the *stories* of serial pictures has come an increase in the spectators who follow them up, and a consequent introduction of serials into theatres where at one time nothing of the kind would have been tolerated.

In conclusion, it may be said that for purposes of plot-study the photoplay serial can hardly be sur-

passed. Good, bad or indifferent, every photoplay serial reveals a sheer ingenuity of plotting that is a genuine inspiration to the writer of often better material. And a careful following-up and study of a *good* serial is a liberal photoplay-writing education in itself.

18. Final Points

More and more, in those—all too few—studios where full scripts are desired, the directors of ability and intelligence are welcoming the help extended by the author—if the author himself is known to be a finished workman. Elsewhere we have quoted Mr. Bannister Merwin, who, long before he became one himself, held that the director was rightfully an interpreter—a reader of and builder from the blue print—of the author. Mr. Merwin was also one of the first photoplaywrights to submit what might be called a fully elaborated script—one in which every scene was so carefully worked out that the *motive* behind every action of every character was made absolutely plain. Notwithstanding the greater length of such a scenario, or continuity, its advantages are emphatic, and directors are, as has been said, approving it more and more as they learn that the author's intention is to assist—to insure a proper interpretation of his thought—and not merely to try to teach the director his business. The script that opens up a way into the very heart of the character so that the actors and the director may be guided in interpreting it, is certainly vastly superior, in that regard at least, to the scenario

which concerns itself chiefly with external action. Motives and the whole inner life of the man, set down clearly and briefly, are in the last degree valuable in showing what a character really is and *why* he does what he does.

Conciseness.—But this desirable sort of scenario elaboration MUST NOT lead to over-expansion. Brevity and conciseness are not necessarily one, any more than are fullness and prolixity. Be concise—cut close to the line; having started your action by setting forth a basic incident at once interesting and plausible, keep the wheels of your story in motion, letting it accumulate speed as it runs on, and never slow down until after the climax has been passed. Keep your eye—your "picture eye"—on your characters as they move about and carry out the actions which you have planned to have them perform; but describe those actions, as well as the motives which actuate them, in just as few words as possible. Do not trifle with the tendency to be wordy, or even to introduce too many scenes.

The time is rapidly coming when the production of a photoplay will mean the earnest and intelligent coöperation of the author, editor, and director. But there is a very decided difference between including in the paragraphs of action everything really necessary to the proper understanding of the motives actuating the different characters and the indiscriminate introduction of extraneous details that neither assist in telling the story nor help in making it interesting.

Over-Condensation.—On the other side of the golden middle-ground lies the weakness of too great brevity, and this is the very fault that some otherwise good writers at times permit themselves to display. Their plots are strong, and their work is so well and favorably known that their scripts are accepted; but because they have over-condensed it becomes necessary for the editor or director to add to the business of a certain character, or possibly to devise explanatory inserts. Too little is worse than too much. In many cases it is the writer's failure to include a few words describing a bit of by-play or a short piece of business that makes the scenario faulty, even though it may find a grudging acceptance.

The Number of Words.—The question has frequently been asked by amateur writers: "How many words are there in a full-reel photoplay—what is the average number of words to a scene?" and so on. No such consideration as the number of words in a script enters into the production of a motion-picture drama. "Photoplays are put on," said one prominent producer, "with a stop-watch in one hand and a yard-stick in the other." It is the number of feet of film used, and not the number of words contained in the scenario, with which the director is concerned. There can be absolutely no set rule—in from ten to fifteen words you may say all that is necessary in the description of a scene that will use up three hundred feet of film. Another scene which consumes one hundred feet may require five times as many words, or more, to make perfectly clear to the director a short but very im-

portant bit of business. If you leave out the non-essentials, you will save on the number of words, but you should never hesitate to tell all that is necessary in order to make clear the motives and actions of your characters.

Simple, Clear English.—The scenario is really nothing more than the synopsis rewritten in detail and divided into scenes. Observe that the paragraphs of action are written in the present tense to help YOU keep the action simple and vivid and PRESENT. Absolutely nothing is to be gained by attempted "fine writing," yet it is true that the best-paid writers today are for the most part the ones who are giving attention to clearness and precision of detail and description when writing the third division of their scripts. But description does not mean hifaluting word painting—*it means clear, concise setting forth of exactly what a thing is.*

The Uselessness of Dialogue.—Dialogue, naturally, is out of place in the scenario. If Frank asks Ethel where she hid the letter, and she replies by opening a volume which she takes from the bookcase and taking it out, that is all that is necessary. Do not write a line of dialogue which tells just what Frank says to her, except as may be required for an occasional cut-in leader. Neither is it necessary to say what words of hers accompany the action of taking the letter from the book where it has been concealed. Yet there is one way in which dialogue may serve a useful purpose in writing the scenario. If by writing a single phrase you can tell the *editor* and the *director* as much as you could by writing several lines of action, there is no

reason why you should not use the line—not as dialogue, however, but as stage directions.[1]

Exterior Backgrounds Valuable.—In planning your scenario remember that for scenes that do not positively demand indoor settings it is best to provide an exterior background, or location. No matter how well provided with scenery a studio may be there is always a certain amount of time lost in erecting sets. Even though the director does not take the scenes in the order in which they are written, he will be able to save a great deal of time if, between the scene that is done in the library and the one enacted in the court-room, he can take his people out and get three or four, or even more, scenes in the open air, where the setting is ready for him. Carefully plan every scene *before you write it,* and see, for instance, if Dick could not propose to Stella in the garden, or on a bench in the park, just as well as he could in the drawing room or in the ball-room. Help yourself to more sales by helping the director to easier work.

Human Interest.—In the Biograph photoplay, "Three Friends," previously referred to in this chapter, there was one short scene that was especially effective—one of those human-interest bits that are characteristic of photoplays that sell. After the arrival of the two men, and the reconciliation between the foreman and the young woman's husband, the former hurries the latter off to the factory, promising to "give him back his job." The third friend hangs behind,

[1] Note the introduction of occasional bits of dialogue in the "action" portion of the O. Henry story in Chapter XX.

and, realizing that the wife is without money to buy food, hands her a banknote. She hesitates to take it; but he, noticing the revolver which she now holds, takes it from her and thrusts the money into her hand in its place, indicating that he is only buying the "gun" from her. The woman smiles gratefully, and the kind-hearted friend hurries out after the other two men.

It will pay the student to remember all the little human touches of this kind that he sees in the photoplays of others, and, while by no means copying them, try to work into his own stories bits of similar value.

Human interest must be woven in the plot, and not thrown in in chunks. As for how to do it, "Each mind," says Emerson, "has its own method. A true man never acquires after college rules." But of one thing make sure: Plan your human appeal from the start, so that the actual climax may loom up distinctly from the time you write your very first scene. As Jean Paul has said, "The end we aim at must be known before the way."

In conclusion, we offer a short catechism that the writer will do well to consult before sending out his script:

Is my plot really fresh?

Could it be called a colorable imitation of any magazine story, book, or play?

Is it strong enough?

Is it logical?

Does it suit the time of year?

Is the plot not only possible but *probable?*

Is the material desired by the producer to whom I am sending it?

Does the company make that style of story?

Are the points properly brought out, that others may see them as I do?

Can I make it better by altering it?

Will it pass the Censors?

Even if it does, will it offend even one spectator?

Do the synopsis and scenario match properly, or have I hinted at action in my synopsis which is not adequately worked out in the continuity? On the other hand, does the synopsis tell everything that happens in the scenario?

Is it impracticable for the camera?

Have I introduced scenes that would cost too much to produce?

Is the cast too small?

Is it too large?

Finally, some anonymous writer has said: "Don't let go of your script until you are positive that you have made every detail clear, that your layout of scenes has told the story in self-explanatory action, and that you have answered every prospective 'Why?'"

CHAPTER XI

THE SCENE-PLOT AND ITS PURPOSE

It has been said in an earlier chapter that it is optional with the writer whether to submit a scene-plot with his complete script; nevertheless, we believe that it is advisable.

1. Why Prepare a Scene-Plot

The reason is a plain one: Until the writer has become known as a professional, it is the spirit in which the scene-plot is sent rather than its actual value to either editor or director that counts in his favor. It indicates his willingness to help both these busy men so far as lies in his power; further, it shows that he is willing to do at the beginning of his career that which he would never for a moment think of leaving undone after his complete scripts are once in demand; but, most of all, it shows that he has enough confidence in his work to believe that—provided the story is acceptable—it will be produced essentially as he has planned it.

Naturally, it often happens that the director adds scenes to those planned by the author, and even oftener some of the author's scenes are cut out; in either case, *however,* so much of the scene-plot as remains un-

changed will have its value. The author may feel that the director's alterations are unwarranted, but that functionary rarely makes additions or cuts unless he works an improvement.

The writer sends the scene-plot along so that, in case no drastic changes are necessary, the director may have all ready his list of scenes arranged in proper chronological order. From these he will prepare his regular scene-plot diagram, which the carpenters and mechanics will use in building the scenery, and by which the stage hands and property men will be guided in setting the scenes and placing the furniture and other "props."

2. The Scene-Plot Explained

Let us now explain the difference between the *only kind of scene-plot with which the photoplaywright is concerned* and that which the director means when he uses the same term.

Practically all directors have had experience as theatrical producers, or stage directors, or stage managers, before entering the moving-picture field. What is known as a scene-plot in regular theatrical work is a list of the various scenes, or sets, showing where the different "hanging pieces" (drops, cut-drops, fog drops, foliage, fancy kitchen, or other borders) are hung, and how all the various pieces of scenery that are handled on the floor of the stage, as wood and rock wings, "set" pieces, "flats," and "runs," are to be arranged or set. Almost every stage carpenter has, in

addition to this list, a supply of printed diagrams showing the exact position on the stage of everything handled by the "grips," or scene-shifters, as well as the proper arrangement on the set of the furniture and larger props. Both the list and the diagram are usually printed on one sheet, and this, known as the scene-plot, is sent ahead to the stage managers of the theatres in the next towns to be played. At the same time, a "property plot," being simply a list, act by act, of the various props not carried by the company, is sent to the property man of the house.

Now, the principal difference between the regular and the moving-picture stage is that, in making photoplays, *natural* exteriors are used, in almost every case. Consequently, landscape and other exterior drops are almost unknown in moving-picture work. As actual drops they *are* unknown; when such painted backgrounds are used, they are usually painted on canvas or a sort of heavy cardboard, which is stretched over or tacked to a solid framework. So that even in making out his working scene-plot diagram, a director finds that there are many technical terms which he constantly used in his theatrical work but seldom or never employs in his capacity of photoplay producer. Nevertheless, he still uses a scene-plot diagram, drawing it himself on regular printed forms.

As may be gathered from the foregoing, the scene-plot diagram for a photoplay setting is entirely different from the diagram of the setting for a scene on the regular stage. The former shows, printed, the comparative shape and dimensions of the "stage," and

gives, in figures, the depth of the stage and the distance from the camera to the "working line," below which (toward the camera) an actor must not step if he wishes his feet, therefore his whole body, to show in the picture.

To say "the depth of the stage" is to say that the printed diagram is marked off in a scale of feet from the camera's focus. The figures at the right side of the sheet indicate the distance in feet from the camera, while those at the left show the width of the field, or range of the camera lens, at different distances. Only that portion of each piece of furniture which is marked a solid black in the diagram is supposed to show in the picture. Thus half of a table may be "in" and half "out" of a picture, or scene. This diagram-form is made out by the director for virtually every set that shows an interior scene, and he frequently draws one also for exteriors, where a building, or even what appears in the picture to be a complete, permanent structure, is set up by the carpenters and mechanics out of doors. Such a scene-plot diagram is reproduced at the end of this chapter.

The scene-plot which you as a photoplay author are called upon to prepare, however, is simply a list of the scenes used in working out your scenario. Here you must distinguish between "scene" and "set" (or setting) in photoplay writing. We know that the scene is changed every time that the camera is moved. One scene or ten may be taken, or "done," in the same set—that is, a half-dozen scenes might be taken successively in a business office without changing the set

at all. Therefore, although you have two hundr*scenes* in your five-reel scenario, only twenty *sets* m be needed in which to play them.

3. How Scenes and Sets Are Photographed

We know that a scene is ended when the camer man stops "grinding;" we understand, also, that change of setting is brought about by moving t camera, even though, in the case of taking two exteri scenes, the camera is only moved enough to take in new "stage" three or four feet to either side of th shown in the last scene.

The word "scene" seems to be a stumbling block fo some beginners. Take for example the setting show ing the bedroom in the ranch house, as listed in the scene-plot of "Without Reward," and given in this chapter. In doing the five scenes that take place in that room, Scene 4 would be taken, the camera would be stopped, and, in some studios, a large white card with the figure "9" painted on it in black would be held a few feet in front of the lens. About a foot of film would then be exposed, which would thus register the number *of the next scene* to be taken in the same set.[1] Then Scene 9 would be done. This scene

[1] Different studios have different methods for recording the number of the next scene to be taken. Some use the numbered card system—as explained in the body of the text—in which a stand, or tripod, having a rack on top with cards numbered from 1 to 50, and other cards marked "Retake," etc., is placed on the working line between each scene. In other studios the film itself is marked with the number of the scene, just as one writes *the name of* a picture on the film when using an "Autographic *Kodak" camera.*

The Reception of King Robert of Sicily by His Brother, the Pope—a Historical Photoplay Produced in the Essanay Studio, Chicago

Same Set, with Players Getting Ready for Action. The Three Poplar *Trees are Real,* while the Rest of the Background is a Painted Drop

being ended, the numbering-of-the-scene process would be repeated, the next scene being number 17. Then, in turn, would come scenes 28 and 30—or, rather, although listed on the scene-plot as two scenes, 28 and 30 would really be photographed as one unbroken scene, for, as a glance at the scene-plot will show, Scene 29 is a bust scene, which means that the film would be cut at the proper place after the scene had been taken, thus dividing it into two scenes, separated by Scene 29 in the finished photoplay.

Now, since Scene 30 is the last to be taken in the bedroom setting, let us suppose that the setting showing the interior of the sheriff's office is standing on the studio floor right next to the bedroom set. The camera is merely shifted over and set up as required to take the two scenes (24 and 26) done successively in that set, and the same process is gone through that was followed in making the five scenes in the bedroom.

This, then, is the one thing that the photoplaywright must remember: All the *scenes* that are to take place in one *setting* or location are made before the camera is moved an inch, and, in one way or another, according to the particular studio, the film is marked after each scene so as to show the number of the scene coming next. The reason is plain: because scenes 28 and 30 (which are subsequently divided by the bust picture) and scenes 4, 9 and 17, are all done in the same set, if the camera were not stopped and the film marked before each new scene with the number of that scene, the operators in the cutting room, where the different parts of the film are assembled, would—un-

less guided by the director—mistake *all* that part of the film showing the bedroom setting for one unbroken scene.

4. How Scene-Plots Are Handled by Directors

The scene-plot for the writer's story, "Without Reward," just referred to, follows:

Exterior of Sheriff's office, main street of town, 1, 23.

Dr. Turner's office, 2.

Exterior, Freeman and Doctor riding to ranch, 3.

Bedroom in ranch house, 4, 9, 17, 28, 30.

Corner of ranch house, looking toward stable, 5, 7, 16, 22, 27, 31.

Exterior, supposedly at distance from, but within sight of, Ranch, 6.

Kitchen of ranch house, 8, 10, 32.

At door of stable, 11.

Foothill trail, 12.

Rocky part of hillside, showing entrance to cave in side of cliff, 13, 15.

Interior of cave, 14.

Exterior, Steve riding to town, 18.

Road on outskirts of town, 19.

Same road, farther on, 20.

Exterior of Dr. Turner's house, 21.

Interior of Sheriff's office, 24, 26.

Rear of Sheriff's office, showing corner of building and side wall, 25.

Bust of Jess's right hand, holding photograph, 29.

Here, it will be seen, there are four interior and thirteen exterior sets, or backgrounds. Scene 14, the interior of the cave, was counted as an exterior when giving the number of interior and exterior sets following the title in writing the synopsis. This was because, although in the picture it would appear to be taken inside a rocky cave, the chances are that it would really be made in some recess of a rocky cliff-side, where there would be enough light to make the photography distinct, without allowing the rays of the sun to cast any shadows that would make it seem unnatural, since the cave was supposedly dimly illumined from the daylight outside. At any rate, it would not be a studio setting—whether the stage was an indoor or an open-air one—so it would be classed as an exterior.

After the cameraman had taken Scene 3, which shows Freeman and the Doctor riding to the ranch, he could probably find a suitable background for the scene showing Steve riding toward the town, by merely turning his camera half way around. Thus Scene 18 might be taken after Scene 3; after which, by again moving the camera only a short distance, a suitable spot might be found in which to take Scene 12. Scenes 19 and 20 were intended to be taken on a fairly well-kept piece of roadway, supposedly on the outskirts of the town, and it might be necessary to travel some distance to find the desired spot. So it will be seen that the order in which the scenes are written has nothing to do with the order in which they will be

taken. Scene 29, so called, is really a part of Scene 28, being simply a bust of the girl's hand holding a photograph. The words written on the back of this picture have an important bearing on the action which follows; therefore it is important that they should be read by the spectators. So, the much enlarged bust picture is introduced, in which, as has been explained in the preceding chapter, the hand with the photograph is held so close to the camera that when the picture is shown on the screen the writing is easily read. In writing out the scene-plot, never omit mentioning the bust picture, if one is used, and give it a number as if it were a distinct interior or exterior, but when giving the total number of interior and total number of exterior settings (which follows your title in writing the synopsis), do not include it as being either one or the other. It is not even necessary to say "One bust picture." On the other hand, close-ups are regarded as regular interior or exterior scenes, and must be counted as such and so mentioned when giving the number of scenes, as described.

5. How the Director Provides the Sets

The director having gone over the author's scene-plot to aid him in preparing his own diagrams of the various settings, it is merely necessary, so far as the exteriors are concerned, to go out himself, or send out his assistant, to pick the natural settings required. In fact, in most modern studios, an elaborate card index system of listing locations, sometimes situated miles from the studio, is maintained. Unless an ex-

terior scene calls for a log cabin, church front, or some building of special construction other than such real buildings as may be easily found in the neighborhood of, or within a reasonably short distance from, the producing plant, he does not have to draw a special diagram-plot for the scene. Even when a new building is needed, it is only necessary to instruct the carpenters to build, say, a log cabin of a certain size on the location he points out, with a door, windows, etc., as determined by him for the requirements of the scene.

With the interior scenes it is different. The sets for these are planned by the director to obtain the very best stage- and scenic effects possible from the standpoints of architecture, lighting, and arrangement of properties.

6. The Director

A first-class company will employ from four to ten, or even twelve, directors. Frequently a new director is recruited from among the actors in the stock company. "Director" and "producer" mean practically the same thing in photoplay parlance; a man will *direct* the acting of the players while engaged in *producing* a picture. As a rule, if a man is known as a "dramatic" director, he adheres to that kind of work, just as a first-class comedy man will seldom touch any other kind of production.

There is always a certain amount of friendly competition among the directors in any studio, since they

constantly vie with each other in obtaining the most artistic settings for the various scenes of their respective stories.

7. Writing the Scene-Plot

The actual writing of the scene-plot should come after the scenario has been completed. One way of doing it is to go over the scenario and write out the various settings, and then give the numbers of the scenes played in each. This, however, is a very roundabout and tiresome method. The best and simplest way is to keep a slip of paper, similar to the one on which you make note of the characters when writing the cast, and jot down the settings as you come to them, adding the number of the scene. In this way as you work on the scenario you have before you a list of every setting used, and can see at a glance what scenes are played in each different setting. Then when your scenario is finished you have simply to slip a fresh sheet of paper into your typewriter and make a neat copy of the complete scene-plot. As a safeguard, it is better, before recopying, to check up so as to make sure that you have every scene accounted for, by counting from "one" to whatever may be the number of your last scene.

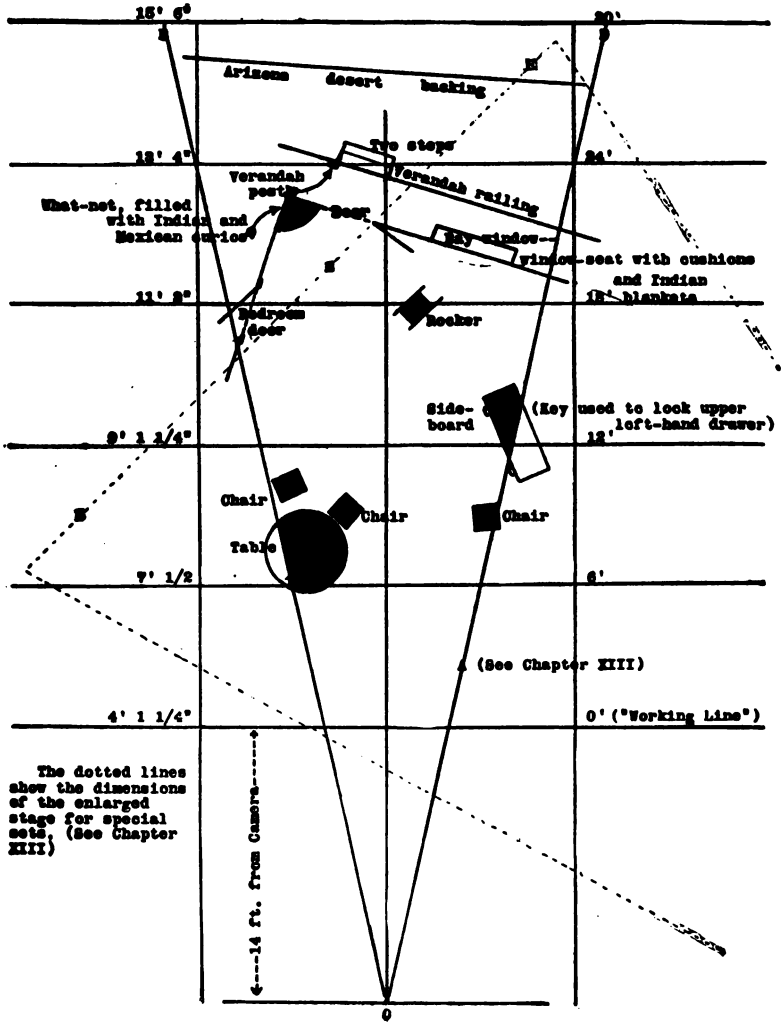
In writing the scene-plot it is only necessary to give a list of the exterior and the interior settings; at the same time, it is sometimes advisable, especially in the case of exterior scenes, to add a few words that will help the director to understand just what the setting is

intended to be without having to refer to the scenario, where such details would naturally appear.

The following example is selected from the scene-plot of "Sun, Sand and Solitude," a scene-plot diagram from which we reproduce on a succeeding page. The theme of this story is the discontent of a young wife, caused by seeing, month in and month out, the sun-baked stretches of the Arizona desert.

> Exterior, showing desert, 17. For this scene, select an extremely barren and unpleasing bit of desert landscape.
>
> Another exterior, 24. A stretch of desert landscape; if anything, more barren and solitary than 17.
>
> Another exterior, 28. While still typical desert landscape, it is much less barren and desolate than either 17 or 24.

There is no law of writing, and no studio rule, to compel you to do any of these little things to help a busy editor or an earnest director, but, just because they are busy men, why not try to help them? So long as the "help" is not overdone, and is intelligent, clear, and concise, it is sure to help your script toward an acceptance.


15' 6"
20'
Arizona desert backing
Two steps
12' 4"
24'
Verandah post
Verandah railing
What-not, filled with Indian and Mexican curios
Door
Bay window--
window-seat with cushions and Indian blankets
11' 8"
Bedroom door
Rocker
Side-board
(Key used to lock upper left-hand drawer)
9' 1 1/4"
12'
Chair
Chair
Chair
Table
7' 1/2
6'
(See Chapter XIII)
4' 1 1/4"
0' ("Working Line")
The dotted lines show the dimensions of the enlarged stage for special sets. (See Chapter XIII)
14 ft. from Camera
0

The scene-plot diagram reproduced on the opposite page is the author's original diagram for the "Living room of ranch house" setting in his photoplay, "Sun, Sand and Solitude." With a little study of this diagram the reader will be able to judge just how the scene would appear in the picture on the screen. Of course, it is neither customary nor necessary to send such a diagram as this when you are submitting your script. There is a possibility, however, that the producer might use the author's diagram as a guide in preparing that particular setting, should the photoplay-wright send one similar to the one here reproduced.

The dotted lines show the dimensions of the enlarged stage for special very large sets. Since the line *E* represents the background of this enlarged stage, it will be seen that it is almost twice as wide as the background for the interior setting here shown. By "background" is meant the space on the diagram between *B* and *D*, not the "desert backing," which, if the scene were taken inside the studio, would be simply a painted background, taking the place of the "drop" which would be used on the regular stage. It will be noticed that, although there are a couple of steps leading to the veranda, there is only one post indicated on the diagram. This, of course, is because a post at the other side of the steps is unnecessary, that point being "masked" by the piece of scenery representing the back wall of the room. The open door shows a portion of the veranda railing and the post on the left of the steps. As the scenario shows, Dean is carried up these steps, and into the bedroom on the left, after he has been thrown from his horse. To the right of the door, and looking out upon the veranda, is a bay window, forming a window-seat. Attention is called to the fact that what is so frequently called a "bay window" is, properly, a "bow window," the three sides of a bay window being at right angles to each other. The sideboard at the right of the stage is absolutely essential to the climax of the plot, though only half of it—enough to show the upper left-hand drawer distinctly—need appear in the picture.

CHAPTER XII

THE USE AND ABUSE OF LEADERS, LETTERS AND OTHER INSERTS

A full reel contains approximately one thousand feet of film. The ordinary five-reel feature is therefore somewhat less than five thousand feet in length. With far less stress laid upon the admonition to "Make your leaders and inserts brief" than formerly, the writer still must keep in mind the fact that the major portion of a five-thousand-foot film must be devoted to *scenes* —to action which the spectator merely watches—and that the inserts, of whatever nature, must never be allowed to crowd this action-part of the picture.

At the same time, any story with the average amount of plot-complication can be told—the action-portion, that is, can be fully worked out—in from 3,800 to slightly over 4,000 feet; which means that something less than one thousand feet of film may be, and frequently is, given up to the various inserts.

This matter of footage is one which demands the attention of both director and cameraman. On the side of the motion-picture camera is an indicator, by which is computed the exact number of feet exposed each time the cameraman turns the handle. At the conclusion of each scene the director cries "Cut!" The cameraman stops turning, looks at the indicator,

and announces "Seventy-five!" or whatever the number of feet used. In some cases it is necessary to take the scene again, altering the "business" slightly or hurrying the action a little to reduce the footage consumed in a certain scene. A point worth noting is that the director can seldom figure in advance the exact amount of footage a certain scene will require—even after it has been rehearsed and timed several times; whereas he *can* always tell the exact number of feet he must give to each of the various inserts, because "insert footage" is reckoned in advance, a certain number of feet being allowed for each word.

Photoplay audiences have gradually been educated up to an appreciation of sub-titles, or leaders, when they are all that they ought to be (a point which we shall presently discuss); and less attention is paid to the rather selfish cry of the illiterates in the audience who insist that "they came to look at pictures, and not to read a book." As one of the most prominent theatre managers in San Francisco recently said in the *Motion Picture News:* "In many pictures the big scene is 'put over' by a sub-title. The wording of a sub-title in a big situation can make or break a picture, and it is therefore false economy to allow this work to be done by any person other than one with real literary talent, who is thoroughly conversant with the art of expression."

We have already pointed out that in most studios the work of writing leaders and inserts is now attended to by one specialist—the "sub-title editor," as he is usually called. Just as much care is put into the

preparation of everything in the nature of an insert as attends the making of the scenes of the picture.

1. Why Inserts Are Used

Before the advent of pictures of five and more reels, with their consequent greater room for inserted matter in addition to the necessary scenes, the general opinion was that the perfect photoplay had no leaders and needed none. Certainly, such a picture would be ideal if a photoplay were to be a motion picture and nothing more than that, since it would be so perfectly acted and so self-explanatory that no inserted explanation of any kind would be necessary. Practically, however, the only photoplay that can be made without the aid of at least a few leaders or other inserts—that is, that can be nothing but pictured action—is one on the order of the Vitagraph Company's one-reel release of several years ago, "Jealousy," in which the entire picture was made in a single set. In it Miss Florence Turner was the only actor, telling the whole story clearly, coherently, and with strong dramatic force, and making every phase of the plot clear, the only outside assistance she received being the momentary appearance of two other hands than her own—a man's and a woman's—through the curtains covering the doorway. This, of course, was pure pantomime, and most artistically performed; the woman's every thought, so to say, was portrayed, and understood by the spectator as if the play were accompanied by a printed synopsis of the story.

But it would seem to be impossible to produce a

photoplay having changes of scene, plot complications, from six to a dozen or more characters, and lapses of action-time between the different scenes, without employing any inserts. Even in a small group of scenes it is often extremely difficult to make a certain important point in the action "register"—that is, show the spectator what is in the minds of the characters as the scene is worked out. In such a case, even though the scenario as planned by the author does not contain an insert at that point, the director may deem it advisable to introduce one to make the situation clear. The use of inserts, then, is necessary.

2. The Over-Use of Inserts

The over-use of them, on the contrary, is not only entirely unnecessary but a positive drawback to the director, and frequently one of the reasons why an unavailable manuscript is returned to the writer. A good rule is to employ inserts only when it is impossible to progress and still make every point of your plot clear and effective without their aid. This need for an insert of some sort at a given point may be inherent in the material and therefore desirable as well as needful, but do not admit such a necessity without serious thought. Ingenuity accomplishes wonders. Remember, the use of a leader is in most cases a frank confession that you are incapable of "putting over" a point in the development of your plot solely by the action in the scenes—you must call in outside assistance, as it were. A scenario written by a novice often contains many leaders which he considers necessary to

tell his story, yet the same plot in the hands of a trained writer could be made into a photoplay with many less sub-titles. Like fire, the leader is a good servant but a bad master. Once you discover that you are getting into the habit of introducing an explanatory insert before almost every scene, it is time to remodel your idea of what constitutes proper technique.

But when a leader can be used to advantage, do not hesitate to insert it—it has a distinct value and that value must not be despised. True, *any* leader halts the action because it destroys the illusion to some extent, and diverts the attention from the picture to the explanatory words. But it is also true that it puts the mind of the spectator in a mood to accept and appreciate the action which is to follow. Therefore, use the leader, or any other insert—*discreetly*.

We have repeatedly advised the would-be photoplaywright to study the pictures as he sees them on the screen, and to gain therefrom a knowledge of what is required by the manufacturers. At this point, however, we would warn writers *not* to copy the example of certain companies whose pictures are nearly always overloaded with sub-titles which appear to have been introduced for no other reason than to afford the subtitle editor an opportunity to do some clever writing.

Many critics have asserted—not entirely without cause—that the type of photoplay comedy-dramas originated by Douglas Fairbanks are less than one-half action, the rest being merely clever but often unessential sub-titling. While this criticism is rather *severe, it* cannot be denied that certain stories of the

kind mentioned, featuring this star and others, have been far too dependent for their appeal to the spectator upon the humorous, epigrammatic sayings of the characters. True, it is usually after leaving the theatre, and reviewing the picture in retrospect, that the spectator realizes that the accent has been too definitely on the sub-titling and not enough upon the action, but when he does realize it, he feels disappointed—and watches the next release featuring the same star to see if it will be repeated. More than ever before, in this day of feature photoplays, there is a constant opportunity to use leaders and other inserts with telling effect. The point simply is that with more leeway than the writer has ever been given before, you should learn to take advantage of every shining opportunity to work in a really effective sub-title, while constantly guarding against the temptation to introduce one on the slightest excuse.

Let such inserts as you do use be phrased in clear, terse language. The old example in the schoolbook, that it is simpler and therefore better to say, "A leather apron" than, "An apron of leather," holds good with inserts, and especially leaders. Short, clean-cut sentences strike the eye and penetrate the mind the most quickly and effectively. If you doubt this, look at a good advertisement. So, do not only dispense with every needless insert, but cut out from each insert every needless word.

3. The Danger of Over-Compression

In cutting, do not go too far. Use enough words to

be clear and definite. Vagueness is an abomination and confusing pronouns make an author as ridiculous as his scene is unintelligible. Remember that the leader is shown on the screen for only a moment, and it is for you to assist the spectator by making your leader so plain "not that it *may* be understood," as Quintilian used to say, "but that it *must* be understood."

It is quite as possible to use too few inserts, especially leaders, as it is to use so few words in them as to mar their meaning. Young writers are often more eager to follow the advice of their mentors than they are bold to use their own common-sense; and having had the importance of brevity well pounded in, they produce scripts with the double fault of not having enough action to make the plot clear, and not enough inserts to help out the action.

As an example of this tendency toward over-compression, take the script of one amateur writer. It contained a scene in which Mary, the heroine, constantly abused by a drunken step-father, steals out of the house at night as if about to start for some other town where she can make her own living and be free from the step-father's abuse. In Scene 7, Mary, carrying a suit case, leaves the farm-house where she had always lived. Scene 8 shows her "plodding wearily" along the road leading to town. Then in Scene 9 we are back in the kitchen at the farm-house. "The room is deserted. (Everyone supposed to be in bed.) The door opens and Mary enters, carrying suit case, which

she puts down just inside the door. She staggers to the rocking chair and drops wearily into it, as if completely fatigued." And so on.

On reading the script, one's natural supposition is that Mary has thought it over while "plodding wearily" toward town, and, remembering the comfortable bed which awaits her at the old home—even though the next morning will bring more ill treatment at the hands of the step-father—has returned to make the best of it. After reading three more scenes, however, we learn that Mary had not only reached the town, but had gone so far as "the big city," from which she had returned after a fruitless search for work. Scene 9 is really supposed to take place two weeks after Scene 8!

Now, laying aside the fact that no scenes are introduced to show what happened to her after she went to the city, the script does not even give a scene showing her boarding a train to go, so there is nothing even to hint that Scene 9 did not take place on the same night that Mary left home.

The point of all this is that, had this script been accepted at all, and even had not the producer chosen to introduce any scenes showing Mary in the city, a leader of some kind between Scenes 8 and 9 would have been absolutely necessary. This, of course, was an amateur script, and the whole story was impossible from the standpoint of logic and the sequence of events; but in more than one picture that has been shown on the screen we have noticed the omission of a leader at a point in the action where one was very

necessary, as a consequence of which the spectator was left—for the space of two or three scenes at least—to guess at what was what.

It is worth remembering that you are not an accomplished photoplaywright until you can produce a story that is thoroughly understandable *all the way through* by action and inserts. You are a clever writer, undoubtedly, if you can produce a "leaderless" script. But it is no indication of cleverness merely to *leave out* a leader—only to find, when your story is produced, that the director has found it necessary to add what you have simply cut out or never put in. He is a foolish and short-sighted writer indeed who gives any director such an opportunity to doubt his knowledge of photoplay technique.

In this connection, let us quote Mr. Frank E. Woods, who, besides being well known as a critic, photoplaywright, director and supervisor of productions under Mr. David W. Griffith, is an acknowledged expert in editing motion pictures.

"Many a picture," says Mr. Woods, "has been ruined by inadequate sub-titles. The makers of the picture have assumed that because *they* understood the meaning of every action, the spectators should also understand, forgetting that the spectators will view the picture for the first time. The moment a spectator becomes confused and loses the sense of what he is seeing on the screen, his interest is gone. While he is wondering 'What are they talking about now?' or 'Who is the chap in the long coat?' or 'How did he get from the house in the woods?' the film is being reeled

off merrily and the spectator has lost the thread of the story. Going to the other extreme and inserting sub-titles where the meaning is perfectly obvious, or telling in sub-titles that which is to be pictured immediately after, should also be avoided, although pictures are sometimes criticized for having too many titles when in fact the keen-eyed critic is the only one who finds them too many. The average spectator is none too alert. . . . The sub-title should be in complete harmony with the story and should never divert interest from the story. It should never be obtrusive. It should be there only because it belongs there. Therefore all sub-titles should be couched in language that harmonizes with the story. Every word should be weighed. Nothing should ever shock the spectator out of his interest in the picture by its incongruity, extravagance or inanity. Too much in a sub-title is as bad as too little—like seasoning in a pudding. The function of the sub-title is to supplement and correct the action of the picture, to cover lapses in the continuity, and to supply the finer shades of meaning which the actor has been unable to express in pantomime." [1]

In passing, let us note one point of considerable moment. Notwithstanding the fact that many pictures are shown in which a leader immediately follows the title, it is much better not to arrange it so. Let your title be followed by a scene—by action—even though the scene be a short one. Then, if necessary, intro-

[1] "Editing a Motion Picture," by Frank E. Woods, in *The Moving Picture World.*

duce your first leader. If when the photoplay opens the title is flashed upon the screen, and immediately a leader is shown, there is a chance that, having taken in the title almost at a glance, the spectator may momentarily divert his gaze and so miss your first leader, only turning his eyes toward the screen again when he notices that a scene is being shown. Again, even though he may be watching closely, the spectator is seldom quite so attentive to an explanatory insert which is shown before the opening scene as he is to one introduced later, when he has already become interested.

Most critics are also agreed that the use of leaders introducing the principal characters (usually accompanied by a few feet of film in which the character named is also pictured, perhaps in the act of bowing to the audience, or in some pose characteristic of the part he plays) is a mistake, when such "introducing" is done before the first scene of the story has been shown. Undoubtedly *anything* coming before the first scene is really out of place—so far as its being part of the story is concerned. Again Mr. Sargent stated a fact when he said that "What goes before the first real scene of a story is no more a part of that story than the design-head is a part of the fiction story. No magazine editor expects the author to be his own artist and supply an illustrated title. Start your story with the first scene of action, and let the director supply the preliminary scenes [close-ups of the principals] and leaders to suit himself."

As a matter of fact, though, the very best reason for

not introducing from three to six or eight characters before the opening scene is that by the time the story has advanced a little many of the spectators have forgotten "who is who," whereas they have a much better opportunity to fix a character's name and occupation—so to speak—in their minds if that character is briefly but properly introduced at the point of his first entrance into the action of the play. Only the fact that we were already familiar with the faces of the contemporary historical characters shown in such features as Ambassador Gerard's "My Four Years in Germany" made it possible for us to keep track, during the first few scenes in which each one appeared, of the persons shown. No one could possibly have memorized the "panoramic" leader giving the cast, with its thirty or more names of characters and players.

4. Four Special Functions of Leaders

Properly used, leaders can accomplish four results very satisfactorily: (a) Mark the passage of time; (b) clear up a point of the action which could not otherwise be made to "register;" (c) "break" a scene; and (d) prepare the mind of the spectator to enter into the scene in the right spirit.

(a) Marking the passage of time. In the amateur script previously discussed, we found the need for this use of the leader. The introduction, between scenes 8 and 9, of a leader telling the spectator that the events in Scene 9 were supposed to happen "Two weeks later" than those taking place in Scene 8, would have

gone a long way toward clearing up the plot of the story. In this case, of course, it would have been necessary to add to the statement concerning the passage of time another statement as to what had happened in the interval, the complete leader reading: "Two weeks later, Mary returns home after failing to get work in the city." Or, better still: "After two weeks of fruitless search for work in the city, Mary returns to her old home."

Try to get away from the monotonous use of the "Next day," "The next day," and "Two years later," style of leader. Say: "The following afternoon," "After five years," "Later in the evening," or "Six months have passed." Even though you find when your story is produced that the director has seen fit to omit altogether the leader that you "wrote in" at a certain point of the action, you have the satisfaction of knowing that, *had* he used one there, he could not have improved upon the one you wrote.

(b) Clearing up a point in the action is too obvious a use of the leader to require much discussion. Some things mere actions cannot express, and some explanations must be verbally made because pantomime suggestion is inadequate. To take their proper place in the photoplay all such leaders should be more than merely explanatory: they should have genuine dramatic value—just as much as an important speech would have in a "legitimate" dramatic production. In the pictured drama the leader really fills in a significant part of the plot which could not be portrayed by wordless action.

Miss Lois Weber, a well-known photoplay author who has also produced some very fine feature photoplays, says in *The Moving Picture World:* "Often the right words in a leader or other insert are the means of creating an atmosphere that will heighten the effect of a scene, just as a tearful conversation or soliloquy, at a stage death-bed will move the audience to tears where the same scene enacted in silence would leave it dry-eyed. Naturally, the wrong words may have the opposite effect, but that is no argument against the leader; it only argues that the wrong person wrote it."

(c) "Breaking" a scene with a leader may be explained by an illustration, which at the same time will serve to exemplify how the mind experiences a more or less unconscious *(d) preparation for the ensuing scene.*

Suppose you have a comedy scene showing a bathtub gradually filling with water because the faucet was left open. In the time required to fill the bath and cause it to overflow, five or six hundred feet of film would be used up if the scene were not changed. Instead of this waste of film, you could, after registering the fact that the running water was rapidly filling the bath, introduce a leader: "Ten minutes later—the tide rises."

Such a leader prepares the spectator for the funny scene that is to follow; and when the next scene is shown, in which the water is overflowing the bath and turning the bathroom into a miniature lake, the spectator realizes what has happened in the ten minutes

which, according to your leader, has elapsed since the last scene was shown.

Or, in your story, a lumberman may be injured by having a tree that he is chopping down fall on him. To show the whole process of felling a good-sized tree would take too long—it would consume too much footage, and be monotonous to the spectator. Also, it is the effect and not how it is obtained that makes a picture of this kind successful. For these reasons the man should be shown as he starts to chop down the tree. Then after he has made some perceptible progress you might introduce a leader: "The accident;" and, following the leader, show the man pinned to the ground by the fallen tree; then proceed with the succeeding action. You may be sure that the audience will understand that the man has been knocked down by and pinned under the tree as it fell; it is only necessary to show these two scenes.

A leader, however, should never be employed to "break" a scene unless there is absolutely no chance to introduce in its stead a short *scene,* the showing of which will help the progress of the plot; or unless a leader will serve the double purpose of breaking the scene and supplying the audience with an explanation that is important just at that time.

Taking the two examples just given, in which a leader is used to break the scene, there is scarcely any doubt that, were you writing these scenes in scenario form, you might easily substitute scenes that would help the action of the story and allow you to dispense

with the leaders altogether. For instance, you could show the scene in which the absent-minded man leaves the water running into the bath and goes out of the room. Then, show a scene in his bedroom, where he is contentedly removing the studs from his shirt. Suddenly he remembers that he has left the water running. With an expression of dismay, he jumps up and runs out of the room. Flash back to the bathroom scene. The tub has overflowed and the room is filling with water. As the excited man opens the door, the flood pours out into the hall. The short scene in the bedroom makes the leader unnecessary. Better fifteen feet of film showing the bedroom scene than five feet of leader.

Again, after the lumberman had started to chop down the tree, you might flash a short scene showing a couple of other men at work in another part of the forest. All at once they both stop work and register that they have heard something that startles them. One speaks excitedly to the other, and both run out of the picture. You then show the scene with the man lying beneath the fallen tree. Presently the two men who heard his cries for help come running up to him.

5. Cut-in Leaders

One very effective form of the leader is the cut-in, described in Chapter X. It takes the form of the speech of one of the characters, being written in quotation marks. This device of throwing on the screen the supposed words of a certain character at the

moment of action enables the photoplaywright to tell all that is necessary much better than he could by a long statement of what is going on—a point that is well worth remembering. Directors are now using the explanatory cut-in leader as much as possible, to the exclusion of the ordinary one which merely states facts. This does not mean that they are trying to substitute "dialogue" leaders, but that wherever the newer form can be used to advantage it is less objected to by the audience than is the bald statement-sub-title—doubtless because it is in line with the illusion of reality in using the player's words, and is not merely an insertion by the director or the author, as other inserts evidently are.

For the reason that all leaders more or less interrupt the action of a scene, some directors prefer decidedly not to use cut-ins more than is necessary, their argument being that for a few seconds following the right-in-the-middle-of-the-scene leader, the mind of the spectator is engaged with the import of what he has just read on the screen, and the action immediately following the leader is at least partially overlooked.

Yet a cut-in leader is usually one that suddenly discloses an important point of the plot. It may be that one of the characters, when the scene is about half through, unexpectedly makes a statement which amounts to a confession of some crime. We read on the screen, "Judge, she said that to save me. That is my revolver!" No sooner has the cut-in been shown, and the action resumed, than the eyes of every spectator are fastened upon the face of the character in the

scene who should, by all logical reasoning, be most affected by that confession. If a scene is important enough to require a cut-in leader, it is reasonable to suppose that it has the full attention of the spectator after the first few seconds of action. This being so, it would seem that the spectator is far less likely to miss a point of the action *immediately following a cut-in* than he is to miss what occurs at the beginning of a scene, following an ordinary between-the-scenes leader. It is a fact that a few directors drag the action of a scene for the first few seconds following an ordinary leader for the purpose of again centering the attention of the beholder on the action itself, before developing—*in* action—another point of the plot.

We have already referred to "panoramic" leaders giving long casts of characters, the leader moving upwards on the screen instead of sidewise as in panoramic *scenes*. Today, the panoramic sub-title, as well as the panoramic letter or other insert, is quite common, especially in feature pictures. Those directors who, notwithstanding all, still favor the use of introductory matter before the first scene, frequently resort to long panoramic sub-titles as a means of making the spectator familiar with the theme of the story before starting to tell it, just as Kipling has so frequently introduced an introductory paragraph of the same nature in his short fiction. To our way of thinking, a thematic sub-title of this kind, used before the opening scene, is far less out of place than the ordinary introductory titles merely having to do with the characters,

because it really does help prepare the spectator for the *kind* of story he is about to view.

Then, again, it may be added that the present-day length of leaders greatly modifies what we say—as a sound guiding principle—in Section 7 of Chapter XVII. A great many excellent detective-story films have been produced, either from original synopses or as adaptations of the work of fiction writers. In these, there has been no hesitation on the part of the director and sub-title editor to use just as many words in a leader as might be necessary to make every point of the story entirely clear and interesting. Paramount's "The Devil Stone," showing the train of tragic events that followed the stealing by a wicked Norse queen of the great emerald belonging to a certain Breton priest, was one example of an intensely interesting detective story in which sub-titles supplied much more than a third of the story—and supplied it, apparently, quite unobtrusively. Here, again, only common sense and experience can show you what to do.

Before leaving the subject of leaders let us say once more that you must seek to find the golden middle ground between the leader that is too flowery in its language and the other that is too stilted and prosaic. Again, in connection with the length of leaders, study the two following from Universal's feature, "The Kaiser, the Beast of Berlin," the first of which contains only seven words, while the second contains fifty-five.

> Joy died, Hope fled. Desolation became supreme.

> Then came the Master crime. An unoffending people was ground into extinction beneath an iron heel. A nation was destroyed. The Crime against Belgium being completed to its fullest, the Prussian stalked onwards with his twin comrades, Frightfulness and Horror. A new blotch of infamy—the *Lusitania*—was added to the Black Name of the Beast.

Notice, also, that as is being done with many feature pictures of this or similar type today, the producers have adhered throughout to the past tense in wording their sub-titles.

6. The Use of Letters, News Items and Similar Inserts

The great thing in using inserts other than leaders is to be able to tell what would be most effective in scoring a point of the plot at an important place in the story. You may start to "write in" a letter and then suddenly get the idea that the same point might be better explained if a newspaper paragraph were used. But no matter what other kind of insert you employ, it will doubtless seem to be more a part of the action than will a plain leader. For this reason it is best, whenever possible, to use a letter, telegram, news item, or some similar insert, in place of a leader. A carefully worded letter introduced at just the right time will sometimes tell the audience as much concerning the complications of the plot as would five or six scenes.

Letters should be short and to the point, but they should also tell as much as possible of *what can not be told in action.* Better a single letter of thirty-five words which tells everything than two or three notes of a line or two each that only suggest what the writer means. Some of the so-called "letters" which are seen on the screen are simply ridiculous on account of their very brevity. If it is a mere note that is dashed off and sent to one of the characters, or a note left where it will be found by someone after the writer has gone away, its brevity is allowable; but when a "letter" is written by a man to an old friend of his—a friend who, he is told, is living in a distant city, when for years he has supposed him to be dead—and contains but seventeen words, it is likely to make the spectator doubt the strength of the former friendship.

It is not always necessary actually to write a long letter; but it is best in such instances to *suggest* that a long letter has been written. This may be accomplished in two ways: You may either show a paragraph in the body of the letter, with a line or two just before and just after it, thus:

On screen, letter.

and it was from him that I learned the truth.

I'll leave for Wheeling on the first train tomorrow, and hope to clasp your hand again before Monday night.

Honestly, old man, it seems too, etc.

or you may write out the ending of the letter in such

a way as to suggest that much more has been said in the forepart of the message, thus:

On screen, letter, folded down to show only this:

> so I'll leave for Wheeling on the first train tomorrow, and hope to clasp your hand again before Monday night.
>
> Honestly, old man, it seems too good to be true. I won't be able to believe that what Morgan told me *is* true until I see you with my own eyes.
>
> Until then, believe me to be
>
> As ever, your sincere friend,
>
> Stephen Loring.

To illustrate the way a letter will consume footage, we reproduce one for which fifteen feet were allowed.

> Lord Cornwallis:
>
> Am now within forty miles of Charlottesville. Thomas Jefferson and the entire Virginia Assembly will be my prisoners today.
>
> Tarleton.

As we know, a letter will sometimes be written by a character in one scene, but the spectators will not learn its exact contents—though they may know just about what he is writing—until a scene or two later, when the letter is delivered to and read by the one to whom it is addressed. On the other hand, we sometimes see an actor write a letter, immediately after which, as he reads it over, it is flashed on the screen. Then, later, we see it delivered, but although the one receiving it is

seen to read it, it is not flashed upon the screen again, because the beholder has so recently been shown what it contains. But it sometimes happens that more than one letter enters into the development of the plot at a certain point, and hence there may be some slight confusion caused by the spectator's not knowing which of two letters the player is supposed to be reading. It is to avoid this confusion that directors generally flash a few feet of the letter a second time, simply to identify it. Thus, if the letter that Tom wrote to Nelly in Scene 6 is delivered to her together with one from her friend Kate in Scene 8, you may write:

> Postman hands Nelly two letters. She registers delight upon noticing handwriting on one envelope. Opens it immediately and reads:
>
> On screen. Flash two or three feet of Tom's letter, same as in 6.
>
> Back to scene.

Few spectators will object to the introduction of letters, telegrams, newspaper items, and the like—provided there are not too many such inserts—because these seem to fit into the picture as a part of the action, and are not, like leaders, plainly artificial interpolations by the author. It need hardly be pointed out, however, that letters and other written messages must not be introduced except for logical reasons. More than one case has been known in which the scenario submitted to an editor specified that one character was to write and hand to another a note which the second character was to read—the note, of course,

was to be shown on the screen—when the contents were simply the words which, on the regular stage, the first actor would speak to the other! Of course, no director would allow such a thing to take place in his picture. In a situation where the story could actually be advanced by showing the beholder what a certain player was supposed to be saying to another, it would be only necessary to introduce a cut-in leader, as previously described.

We have spoken of substituting a newspaper item for a letter. Wherever this can be done, it is well to do it; the newspaper item, being printed, is at least readable. One or two of the studios use letters in which the handwriting is so poor that before all the spectators have read the contents of the letter it has disappeared and the scene has been resumed.

Let us suppose that Edith—not knowing that her friend Eleanor has fallen in love with Jack Temple, whom they met at a resort the previous summer—writes Eleanor a letter in which she says:

On screen, letter.

and I'll send it in my next letter.

By the way, I heard a report that Jack Temple—the fellow that you thought was so bashful—was seriously injured in the wreck of the Buffalo Express last week. I

Back to scene.

The expression on Eleanor's face, as she reads this, would be the same as if she had picked up a newspaper and read:

at the time of the collision.

Among those reported injured are James T. Appley, Syracuse, N. Y.; Lloyd W. Stern, Boston, Mass.; Mrs. Geo. P. Rowley, Bangor, Me.; and John Temple, New York City.

Conductor Thomas Hammond told a *World* reporter that as soon as the report

Of course, at some point in the action previous to the scene in which Eleanor reads this report in the newspaper, you will have made the spectators familiar with the hero's name by means of a leader or some other insert.

"Where the information is brief," says Mr. Sargent,[1] again, "it may be better displayed as a newspaper headline. A two-column display head is better shaped for use on the screen than the deeper single-column head. A deal of information may be conveyed in a headline and the spectator seems to read the item over the character's shoulder rather than to have been interrupted by a leader."

Mr. William Lord Wright, author of "The Motion Picture Story," has this to say on the subject:

"Nearly all photoplays now contain a flash of newspaper headline. It's a good way of putting over the information essential to the plot, but it is suggested that the headlines be properly written. Perhaps the author of the playlet was a novice in writing headlines, or maybe the director was a know-it-all. If not a newspaper man and a headliner, we would advise the

[1] *Epes* Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay.*

author who wishes to use headlines in his action to get some newspaper man to write them for him. Some of the would-be newspaper heads we have read on the screen lately are not impressive or well written. Headlining is a difficult art."

If you have occasion to use a will, mortgage, or other legal document, in telling your story, you will realize that the property man in every studio has the blank forms on hand for anything that you may introduce. It is therefore only necessary to show, say, the back of the mortgage on the screen, with the names of the principals written upon it. Then, later in the scene, or in some other scene, you can show the body of the mortgage. But if you show the body of such a document in Scene 10, after having shown the outside in Scene 4, it would be well to flash the outside, or cover, again in 10, before displaying the contents—for the purpose of identifying it, as in the case of the letter.

In passing we may mention the letter or other document which is actually written by the actor who is *supposed* to write it. Such a piece of writing, of course, must be, and is, not an "insert," but rather a part of a close-up scene. It might appear in the scenario thus:

27—Close-up of upper part of Allison's body, right hand writing in pencil on one of Enderby's letterheads. He writes:

It took eleven years to get you, Enderby, as I swore I would, some day. Now that I've kept my oath, I'm ready to pay the price, and you will

It is comparatively seldom, however, that this kind of close-up is made use of—usually because the actor or actress does not write a sufficiently clear hand for satisfactory "screening." More often the player will be seen starting to write the note, and then the close-up of another hand, *supposedly* that of the player, will be shown, writing the words designed to be read by the spectator. In either case, they are close-ups, but the wording must be given in full, just as if you were writing an ordinary letter or other insert to be shown on the screen *after* it has been written. But do not confuse what we have just said with the fact that, nowadays, nearly every letter that is screened is shown in what is literally a *bust* picture, the letter or document being held in the hands of the player as he or she reads it. This is merely an additional realistic touch added in the studio; the writer supplies his insert in the regular way.

The proper use of leaders and other inserts is a part of the technique of photoplay writing that is best learned by practise. Be sure to keep a carbon copy of your script. Then, if your story is accepted and produced, when you are watching it on the screen note the leaders carefully, comparing them with the ones you originally wrote, and profit by what you see. If the producer has seen fit to make changes of any kind, there is a reason, and it is generally safe to assume that it is a good one.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PHOTOPLAY STAGE AND ITS PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

By "the photoplay stage" we mean all that sweep of view which is taken in by the range of the camera, whether in the studios or out of doors. At first this may appear to be of very wide area, but the scene-plot diagram (see Chapter XI) will give a good idea of space-limitations in staging the picture.

1. Scope of the Stage

To begin with, the actors must be constantly on the alert to avoid "getting out of the picture" while the scene is being taken. Suppose an actor is seated in a reclining chair that has been "set" where the line *A* cuts it in half, so to speak. If he is leaning forward, he will be completely in the picture. But if he forgets himself and leans back it is likely that the upper part of his body will not appear when the film is developed. To avoid this, the V-shaped lines shown on the scene-plot are actually marked on the floor, in some studios. A piece of strong cord, or sometimes wire, is stretched tightly from *B* to *C* and thence to *D*. Within this V-shaped space the complete set must be made, and within these limits the entire scene is played. In the case of a set requiring more than the ordinary amount

of depth, a larger stage is obtained by setting the back part of the scene (or set), as shown by the dotted line *E*, and laying down a special pair of V lines to cross the permanent ones on the studio floor. When the camera is placed at the apex of this larger V, the picture is, naturally, made many feet deeper, with a corresponding width of background as the lines diverge.

2. Number of Stages Used

As a rule, there are at least four of these V-shaped stages side by side on the floor of the studio in any of the big producing plants. Thus four entirely different sets may adjoin each other; and, as was pointed out in a previous chapter, a director may finish Scene 8 in Set I and move directly to Set II, where the scene "done" may be 9, or any later scene, depending very often upon whether the players will have to make a change of costume or make-up. A careful director will always try to avoid waits by having his scenes set up in the order that will allow him to proceed with as few delays as possible.

In some studios, the fact that walls and ceiling are of glass permits the taking of most scenes, on a bright day, without the aid of artificial light. In the majority of studios, however, all scenes taken indoors are produced with the aid of artificial light, daylight being excluded. Natural lighting, in *indoor* studios, has been found to be rather unsatisfactory; artificial lighting,

with constant experimentation in an effort to produce better "effects," is what is most used today.

3. Stage Lighting

The Cooper-Hewitt system of interior lighting is probably the most used in the various Eastern and West-coast studios. Everyone—at any rate, everyone living in the city—is familiar with the peculiar lights used in many photographers' studios. These Cooper-Hewitt lights seem to be merely large glass tubes that shed a ghastly blue-green tinge over everything, and under which photographers may take pictures regardless of exterior light-conditions. In addition to the Cooper-Hewitt lights, in a studio equipped with that system, there are, of course, various other kinds of special lights used in obtaining certain unusual effects.

In other studios, a brilliant white light is used, rows of overhead lights being supplemented by tiers, or "banks," of side-lights, so that there is no shadow on any part of the set unless it is the specific purpose of the director to *have* a shadow in a certain place.

One of the big producing plants has two studios—one in which both daylight and artificial light are used, and another, at the top of the building, with glass walls, and a ceiling which constitutes the roof of the building, where every scene is taken with natural light. On a bright day the latter studio is used; if there is no sunlight at all, the downstairs studio is kept busy. On the immense floor of the daylight studio, as many

as eight different ordinary sets may be erected side by side at one time.

During the past five or six years, and especially since the Pacific Coast has become a great photoplay-producing centre, more and more "interior" scenes are made on outdoor stages. This method of taking the scenes in a picture has now been reduced to a fine art. The outdoor stages, not needing the artificial lighting systems, have their various overhead and side screens, so that scenes may be photographed regardless of the natural light-conditions.

Frequently the director will put up a special outdoor stage overlooking the sea, or a beautiful garden or landscape, on which to build a certain interior setting planned to have that outlook. Indeed, today, the artificial background for any interior having windows or open doors is unusual. In Jacksonville, Florida, and other southern cities, as well as in California, the outdoor stage is the most used. The outdoor stage is especially useful in taking, let us say, a scene showing the interior of a house supposedly during a heavy storm, with the rain beating against the windows and being dashed in at the door when it is opened. On the exterior stage, such a scene can be taken at almost any hour of the day, and with the screens to dim and diffuse the rays of the sun, and the skillful use of an ordinary hose in the hands of the property-man or assistant director, a very realistic storm scene can be secured. Many extremely realistic rainstorm effects can also be arranged for exterior scenes, and as for *light*ning—sheet, forked, or any other variety—it is

one of the easiest things to "get" imaginable. The mere scratching of the negative film with a pin, throughout the number of frames covering the flash of the lightning, the scratching, of course, being in the shape the lightning is to take, makes it possible to have thrillingly natural stabs of fork and chain lightning just where it is needed in any scene. You need never hesitate to call for a lightning storm if your story warrants one at a certain point.

A practical point in favor of the outdoor stages is that there is a tremendous saving in the company's bill for lighting. Besides the cost, the outdoor "interiors" are as satisfactory in every way as those made beneath the artificial lights.

It is unnecessary to point out to anyone who has visited the picture theatres that outdoor scenes taken at night are now as common as exteriors photographed at mid-day. Everything from camp-fire effects to night battle-scenes has been accomplished with wonderful results. Interior effects of firelight, moonlight, candle-light, etc, are easily procured, and are usually most convincing and sometimes exceedingly beautiful, when taken in conjunction with the setting.

4. Rehearsals of Scenes

Different studios have different rules for preventing so much as the possibility of there being some fault with the photography when a certain scene is "done." In some studios the rule is to take every scene at least twice, or even three times. When the films are de-

veloped, the one which is not only clearest and sharpest photographically, but which shows—even though by ever so small a difference—the best action on the part of the players, is kept, and from this the positives are printed. In other studios, each scene is taken only once at first; and if the film proves to be faulty the scene must be retaken, even though a day or so later. In every studio, of course, each scene is rehearsed before being "done." Sometimes running over the scene once or twice is sufficient, while other big scenes may be rehearsed fifteen or twenty times. Not only to obtain the best effects in action and grouping is a scene rehearsed many times, but repeated goings over are often necessary in order to change the action slightly, or to cut it down so that it will run only a certain number of seconds, each sixty seconds representing, approximately, as many feet of film.

5. Respect for Stage Limitations

At all times you must keep in mind the limitations of the photoplay stage. If you have the picture eye, as described in Chapter X, you will be able to see just what you can, and can not, write into a picture so that it will register. If it does not register, it might better not have been written. As Mr. Sargent once said, "Pretty nearly everything is possible to the camera, but not all things are practicable." In the same article, he gave a practical illustration of camera limitation that should guide photoplay authors in determining what not to write:

"Suppose you've written a chase scene. A band of horsemen dash through the picture. The hero is wounded and falls from his horse, rolling to the side of the road. The pursuers thunder past and then the heroine comes in and rescues the hero. This is photographically possible, but not practical. The dust and the smoke will create a haze that will dim the end of the scene. It can be done by letting the hero lie while the dust settles, the camera being stopped meanwhile, but unless the scene is strong enough to repay this trouble the script will be passed over in favor of one that can be made without so much fuss."

Almost every day, directors and cameramen—especially cameramen—risk life and limb in an effort to secure some novel scenic effect as a background for their pictures. It should be remembered, however, that what the director may choose to do when it comes actually to taking the scene has nothing to do with the scene as you write it—so far as the actual background is concerned. Do not demand that the struggle between the sheriff and the leader of the cattle rustlers must take place upon just such and such a kind of precipice. You may be certain that if the situation is a strong one the producer will spare neither time nor pains to secure the most perfect setting it is possible for him to obtain.

The moving picture camera, it is well to remember, is of no light weight when set up on its massive tripod. The cameraman cannot place it in position to take all the pictures that you might be able to take with a snapshot camera held between the hands. The body of the

camera, without the tripod, may be placed upon the overhead beams in a studio in order to get some novel scenic effect below; or a special platform may be built for camera and operator when the director is determined to get a scene on the side of a cliff, where no neighboring cliff or rocky platform was furnished by nature; but when the director goes to such pains as these to obtain an effect there is a reason, and generally the reason is an unusually strong story that justifies special effort on the part of all concerned in its production.

Mr. William E. Fildew, one of the foremost screen cameramen, long associated with director William Christy Cabanne, says in *The Moving Picture World:*

"As to what constitutes the greatest difficulty in the making of motion pictures, I should reply the insecurity of the tripod in the making of outdoor scenes. Exteriors require the greatest amount of attention from the cameraman because of the varying light and shade and the mobility of the camera itself and its liability to accident. The location chosen by the expert may be all that is desired, and there may be a whole lot of trained performers, but you can't get a trained camera. The tripod must be nursed like a contrary child. It *must* be firmly set." Mr. Fildew speaks of the difficulty he had, on one occasion, when he was obliged to follow the progress of an express train while operating his camera from an aëroplane, they being constantly buffeted by pockets of wind, while flying for many miles at a low altitude in order to keep within the desired focus. He cites another

case, when he was photographing the sea scenes for the Fine Arts picture, "Daphne and the Pirates," the waters outside San Francisco Bay being chosen for the locale. A pirate ship crew was to board a merchant ship, and a big battle to follow on the latter's deck. A heavy storm came up just as the two ships came together, and Mr. Fildew, 120 feet up in the air, holding to a mast that swayed like a pendulum, was compelled to go through with what was a most difficult and dangerous piece of work, which, however, resulted in some exceptionally fine scenes. In these instances, of course, it was a matter of the director's planning almost everything just as he wanted to take it; the point we insist upon is that it is better to write certain difficult scenes more in the form of a suggestion than as if it were absolutely necessary to take them just as you have visualized them. Not a few successful writers try to think of two different ways in which an important part of the story may be "put over." Thus, just as an off-hand example, you might suggest that the running fight between the bank robbers and the police may take place in a couple of automobiles *or* in an auto and a locomotive. Rest assured that the director will provide the locomotive instead of the second automobile if he can procure one.

Watch the pictures on the screen and you will see what effects are produced; and it follows that if a thing can be done once it can be done again. But will it be *worth while* in the case of *your* story? This is a point that you must determine before venturing to specify that particular effect. Do not be carried away

by the fact that it *is* your work. Weigh the importance of that scene and compare it with the dramatic value of the scenes which precede and follow it; if the scene with the unusual and difficult effect is the big scene of an unusually big and interesting story, write it in. The chances are that the director will be only too glad to stage it according to your original idea. But do not ask him to waste his time or the company's money in producing a scene the expense and bother of obtaining which is out of all proportion to the importance of the rest of the picture. And do not forget that the camera, wonderful as it is, cannot and does not do everything that it seems to do. In other words, do not mistake an effect produced by trick photography for one that is merely the result of exceptional care and work on the part of both cameraman and director.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW TO GATHER IDEAS FOR PLOTS

1. Watching the Pictures

Unless you are already a successful fiction writer when you first determine to write photoplays it is not going too far to assert that you have never yet really watched a motion picture. You have *witnessed* many, but only the playwright and the theatrical man may be said to *watch* plays, whether on the stage or on the screen, with every faculty alert and receptive, ready to pounce on any suggestion, any bit of stage business, any scenic effect, or any situation, that they may legitimately copy or enlarge upon for their respective uses. This keen attitude is partly a matter of inborn dramatic instinct, but it is even more a matter of training and habit—therefore cultivate it.

Not only does the professional photoplaywright remain wide awake when watching real photoplays, but he often finds as much plot-suggestion in other classes of films as there is in the story-pictures, for plot-germs fairly abound in scenics, vocationals, microcinematographics, educationals, and topicals, as these several sorts are called by the craft. A certain successful writer has sold no less than thirty photoplays, all the plots of which sprang from scenics and educationals. One, for example, was built upon an idea picked up

in watching a film picturing the making of tapioca in the Philippines.

At the outstart you must admit to yourself that to see every release of every company is impossible, and even if it were possible it would be unnecessary. In the big cities, for example, it is often difficult to locate a theatre that is exhibiting the particular picture you are anxious to see, either on the date of its release or later. Nothing is more common in a moving picture studio than to hear one actor say to another: "To-night such and such a theatre is showing such and such a picture [one in which they have worked]; let's go over to see it." And if the actor is anxious to study acting through watching the work of himself and others on the screen, how much more should the writer be willing and anxious to study the technique of the photoplay by paying frequent visits to the picture theatres? Try, then, to see as many photoplays as your time and means will permit, for purposes of study. Nor do we recommend seeing only pictures that the critics have praised, for it is possible, at times, to learn as much from a poor picture as from a good one. You must teach yourself, as you watch the screen, what to *leave out*, as well as what to put in; we may learn much from the mistakes of others.

One point especially worthy of notice is that when you see a good picture on the screen it may be one written by a successful photoplaywright, and as such likely to repay close study to see how the successful construct their stories. Or it may be a picture written in the producing studio from the bare idea purchased

from an "outsider." In either case, look out for and carefully study the pictured stories produced by writers who are "putting them over."

If you are taking up photoplay writing as a profession, or even as an avocation, there is only one way to undertake it—be fully equipped to succeed. It is not enough, as we said in an early chapter, to have had previous training as a fiction writer; nor enough to have acquired a knowledge of photoplay form and construction. You must be "up to the minute" in your knowledge of the market for scripts. Therefore be in touch with what writers, editors, and producers are doing. Do everything in your power to avoid writing stories similar to others that have been done within the past year or two, at least. It is not merely a question of plagiarism, important as that is—it is a matter of helping yourself to sell your script by not offering old ideas to the editors. Fully one-half of the *good* stories that go back to the authors are returned because the companies have already done a similar picture and do not wish to have exhibitors and their patrons declare that "The Cosmopolitan Company must be writing over their old pictures because they can't get new stuff."

2. What to Look for in a Picture

Besides avoiding the similar use of ideas that have been utilized by others, it is most important in watching a picture to be able to see what the one who wrote it did *not* see—to be able to pick up an idea that he *might* have employed in working out his story, and

from it get the inspiration and plot-foundation for a photoplay of your own. In addition to studying the action to see how certain effects are produced, count the number of scenes and the number of leaders used in the different makes of pictures. It will serve as a guide to what the different makers want. In case you do not care to sit through a second showing of the film, or do not want to risk missing part of the picture by counting the scenes and leaders, make a practice of carrying a few small cards, with a line drawn down the middle of each. As the card is held in the hand, mark with a pencil a short stroke on one side for every change of scene, and on the other side a stroke for each leader, letter, or other insert—this will serve as a convenient record-device.

3. The Note-Book Habit

To have the plot-instinct is a great blessing for the writer. Lacking this, however, the most valuable asset he can possess is the note-book habit. Carry one with you *constantly*. Jot down everything that may be of help in framing and developing a plot, as well as in creating a dramatic scene for a story. Remember that plots are not lying around fully developed, awaiting only some observant eye to discover them, but they almost always grow out of single ideas—plot-germs—which one may recognize as incidents and situations in everyday life or in unusual circumstances. Do not wait for the fully developed plot to come to you, for the chances are that it will not. Jot down the single idea and in time it may germinate and become a fully

William S. Hart, Leaning on the Camera, with part of His Supporting Company and the Cameraman and His Assistant in a Scene from "The Poppy Girl's Husband," an Artcraft Picture

Harry Beaumont Directing Fight Scene Between Tom Moore, Goldwyn Star, and the Villain, in "A Man and His Money"

developed plot—even though you may have to use hot-house methods and force its growth.

It seems incredible that any writer, knowing, as he must, that the idea, the plot-germ, is what really makes the story, should neglect to note it down the moment it comes to him; and yet there are those who simply trust memory to retain an impression. In the photo-play especially "the idea's the thing" for here you cannot depend on description or on good writing to sell your story.

The rule of jotting down your thought on the instant does not apply merely to ideas that come as inspirations, or thoughts suggested by what you read or see, but it applies especially to the ideas that come to you at the time you give yourself up to concentrated thinking in play-production. A certain writer on the photoplay—we do not recall who—once wrote a paragraph headed "When do you do your thinking?" This critic found that he could think best when riding, say on a street car. Others have discovered that ideas come to them most freely when they are sitting in a theatre. One writer has learned that his best plot-ideas come to him after he lies down for the night. For this reason, a tabouret with pad and pencil always stands at his bedside, and a special self-installed switch for the electric light is within reach of his hand. Now, with his note-book always with him when he is away from home, with note-books and card-indexes close at hand when he *is* at home, and with the means of instantly putting his thoughts on paper if they come to him after he has gone to bed, he knows that he is in

a position to take advantage of every stray idea that may contain a plot germ, or that may aid him in developing a story already in course of construction.

If the beginner would only understand the importance of systematic note-making, he would soon reduce by one-half the labor of unearthing plots for his stories.

4. The Borrowed Plot

All is grist that comes to the mill of the writer who keeps a note-book. Almost everything that he reads, sees, or hears, offers some plot-suggestion, or suggests a better way of working out the plot he has already partly developed. But, in taking plot-ideas from the daily papers and writing stories suggested by the anecdotes and the conversation of friends, proceed with great care, lest you make trouble for yourself or for others. In a later chapter we show how many cases of alleged plagiarism are simply the results of two people taking the same idea from the same newspaper paragraph. The point here made is that if you take an idea from a newspaper item there are three courses open to you—one safe course, and two not safe. The unsafe ways are, to recopy the story bodily, using in your story all the facts set forth in the news item; or else to change it only enough to insure its being "the same, yet not the same." If you adopt either of these two foolish and dangerous methods, you are extremely likely to find that you have either been forestalled by someone who wrote a story on the

subject before you did, or that your story, following closely the original facts, has given offense to someone who was concerned in the actual case. If you live in a small community, the risk of thus offending is, of course, correspondingly greater.

The one safe way is to use the plot-germ, and *only* the plot-germ, taken from the item in the paper. If you can take the central idea and remodel it so that the very reporter who wrote the original item would not recognize it, you may legitimately claim to have produced an original story. That is, moreover, what you *should* do, leaving aside all questions of your script's being accepted, and the possibility of its being refused because of its similarity to one previously purchased from some other writer.

The main incidents of a prominent court trial may supply you with an idea for a strong, original story, but you should not think of following the facts of the case just as they occurred in real life. To *copy* a story from a newspaper item and to *get* a story from the same source are two entirely different things. Press clippings, as an author once remarked, "are not first aid to the feeble minded. They are merely sign-posts that point the way to the initiated." And another has said: "It is the art of seeing and appreciating just a line or two in some newspaper item and working it up that makes newspaper study pay."

The really practised writer realizes that the best plot-suggestions are to be found in the shorter news items—the five-to-ten-line fillers—and not in the big

sensations of the day. But then, the practised writer can find ideas anywhere.

One thing of which the beginner should beware is the practise of writing stories from plots suggested by friends. As a rule, the young writer, not yet having learned to think for himself, is quick to accept these friendly suggestions. He is told the outline of an unusually good story and straightway turns it into a photoplay. It is accepted, but a short while after it has been released someone recognizes in it a short-story that has appeared in a popular magazine. It is not difficult to imagine the result—before very long the film manufacturing company is compelled, whether by a sense of justice or by law, to make settlement with the magazine company holding the copyright on the original story, and the beginner finds that he is decidedly *persona non grata* with at least one manufacturer. Should the matter become generally known, he is likely to find himself barred by other companies also, as every editor has an inborn dread of the plagiarist, even though he may have been innocent of any thought of wrong doing.

5. Keeping Well Informed

The best means of avoiding unconscious plagiarism and the use of old material is to keep informed as fully as you possibly can of what is released week by week. You cannot be too well posted on what is going on in the photoplay business-world. Your selling-average will be higher as a result. The editor knows what is old and what is new, and so must you, though doubt-

less not so perfectly. Every editor's office is stocked with books, reference works, magazines, trade publications, and files of newspaper clippings. These all contain something of practical value in working up the bare ideas bought from contributors or in writing his own story—for editors as well as producers often write photoplays.

You can hardly go too far in making a study of the various motion-picture trade journals, because, quite apart from the material furnished by the different studio publicity departments—which material, for a certain week, may be practically the same in all the publicity mediums—each periodical may be depended upon to have at frequent intervals if not in every issue some good special article that will either help to instruct the writer or furnish a "tip" as to the immediate needs of a certain company. While we make special mention of *The Moving Picture World* because of the fact that it has had Mr. Sargent's department as a regular feature for over eight years, we also recommend the student to keep regularly in touch with what is published in the *Motion Picture News* (New York), the *New York Dramatic Mirror, Motography* (Chicago), and—for the sake of their critical reviews—any other trade periodicals he may be able to procure. Apart from the trade journals, you can always be sure of finding well-written special articles or regular departments of interest to photoplaywrights in such monthly and semi-monthly magazines as *Photoplay* (Chicago), *Motion Picture Magazine* and *Motion Picture Classic* (Brooklyn, N. Y.), *Picture-play Maga-*

zine (New York), and *Moving Picture Stories* (New York). Many popular magazines also print excellent photoplay material frequently and such craft-periodicals as *The Writer's Monthly* (Springfield, Mass.) are always especially helpful to authors. All such tools of the writer's trade you should get as regularly as you can—and *use* them.

So long as you get your plot-ideas honestly, where you get them is altogether your own matter. But get them you must, for, as A. Van Buren Powell has said: "Everyone will grant that in photoplay writing 'The Idea's the thing.' The script of the beginner, carrying a brand-new idea, will find acceptance where the most technical technique in the world, disguising a revamped story, will fail to coax the coy check from its lair."

So, let your ideas be original. Get your inspiration, your plot-germ, from any source, but be sure that, before you claim the story for your own, you have so changed and reconstructed the original that it is absolutely yours.

Here is a paragraph by Mr. Eugene V. Brewster, in *Motion Picture Magazine,* of which he is editor: "It is extremely difficult to think out a plot that has not been done before. You may not have seen it before, you may have invented the whole thing out of your brain, but the probabilities are that the manufacturers have done the same thing, with slight variations, time and time again, and that the same idea has been submitted to them dozens of times. You may think you have worked out something entirely new, but you

should remember that the regular writers employed by the manufacturers have been reading and thinking for years in an effort to devise something new, and that they have been trained to do this very thing."

True, it *is* difficult to think out a plot that has not been done before; but this very fact, instead of discouraging the writer, should offer him the greater incentive to discover original ideas for his stories. That the manufacturers are once in a while forced to make over their old plays should convince the photoplaywright that they are more than willing to buy new ones if they are the kind they are looking for, and that he should study the market to see what the manufacturers want, and then write the kind they *are* looking for.

Lastly, we would say most emphatically that the staff-writers employed by the different companies have absolutely no advantage over the trained and intelligent free-lance author in the production of original plays. It is just as hard to think up original plots if one is on the salary list of one of the manufacturers as it is for you who do your work at home and turn out only one script a month. The important fact is, that the staff-writer would never have been offered the position he holds had not the editor recognized his ability to keep up a fairly steady output of plays with plots and techical points of more than average merit. He was an original writer *before* he became a member of the staff, *not because* he is in the employ of the producer.

The field is wide and growing, but nowhere is there

room for untrained, incompetent, hit-or-miss dabblers. The man who is in earnest, who keeps in touch with what is going on in the trade, who watches the pictures to gain ideas and inspiration, who studies the life about him to find plot-suggestions and motives, and who, once started, keeps at it—working, working, working—cannot fail to find that his reward will justify the effort.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT YOU CANNOT WRITE

The caption of this chapter must be taken as a serious warning that there are certain things which you cannot write into a script unless you wish to insure its rejection. These specific warnings are based on the experiences of amateurs who have had their scripts returned with the brief and unsatisfactory statement that they were "not available for present use," or that the "cost of production is too great."

1. Asking the Impossible or the Impracticable

It is a constant source of mingled amusement and dismay to editors to read some of the impossible or impracticable things that amateur photoplaywrights wish to have done in the course of the action of their stories. Three things are responsible for this common fault in photoplay plotting: the writer's very limited knowledge of the limitations of the photoplay stage; an intense desire to be original; and the fact that, having seen in the pictures themselves so many evidences that the manufacturers do not let the question of expense stand in the way of attaining spectacular and realistic effects, they go blindly ahead and introduce scenes to take which would so enormously run up the cost of producing the picture that the expense

involved would be out of all proportion to the value of the scene as a part of the story.

Better to illustrate these points, we reproduce a paragraph from an article by Mr. R. R. Nehls, manager of the American Film Manufacturing Company:

"Ordinary judgment should tell a writer about what is possible in the way of stage equipment to carry out a plot. We can provide almost anything in reason, such as wireless instruments, automobiles, houses of every description, cattle, etc., but we cannot wreck passenger trains, dam up rivers, and burn up mansions merely to produce a single picture. There is no rule to guide you in these matters save your own common sense."

Now, the foregoing paragraph was written by Mr. Nehls some six years ago. We include his opinion in this volume, however, because it is absolutely necessary to consider expense when planning a story for the screen. On the other hand, it must be said for the benefit of the new and talented writer who really has or can evolve big situations for his stories that never in the history of the motion picture have manufacturers been so ready to do the big thing in a big way as they are now. That is to say—and this whole statement should have your most careful consideration—the only thing that a manufacturer considers today is the question of whether or not a certain effect, scenic, mechanical, or whatever it may be, is *worth* the money which would have to be spent to obtain it. It would be folly to say that train wrecks, burning

houses, destroyed bridges, and the like, are "impossible" in a film story, after every patron of the picture houses has seen on the screen everything from the wrecking by earthquake of a whole village to the burning of a huge sailing vessel—have seen, in very fact, almost everything that it is possible to see on the earth, above the earth, or in the waters under it. We have indeed reached a period of amazing spectacular effects, produced, in most cases, at enormous cost. And yet today a far closer watch is kept on the cost than ever before.

How are we to reconcile these two apparently conflicting statements? The answer is simple: Nothing is too costly if it pays for itself—as reckoned by the sale of prints when the picture is placed on the market. If, for example, "The Birth of a Nation," "Civilization," "Cabiria," "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," and ever so many other super-features that have been made since these were produced, had cost twice as much as they actually did, they would still have been exceedingly profitable ventures for the ones who put them out. If you have the story to justify the big scenes and effects you will unhesitatingly be provided with all the effects the story calls for. Today, economy is practiced *after* the story has been purchased; the unusually good plot is not persistently returned because of the expense attached to putting it into film form. Ways and means are found within the studio to produce, for every thousand dollars paid out, an effect—a result—such as to make it appear that from three to five times that amount has been ex-

pended. Sometimes, indeed, an effect produced at comparatively trifling expense, often by trick photography or by "faking" or substituting for some expensive property, is even *more effective* than the real thing would have been. As an example, the effect on the screen of a miniature—a "fake"—Zeppelin falling through the clouds, a blazing mass, was convincing, thrilling and easy to produce, whereas from the spectator's point of view it would have been well nigh impossible to make a satisfactory photograph of a real Zeppelin consumed by flames and falling to destruction, even though it had been both possible and financially worth while to burn a real dirigible.

Another thing to be remembered is that Mr. Nehls wrote his statement at a time when one-reel pictures were the rule; and what would have been considered enormously expensive for a single-reel story is not thought so much of when it is to be included in a production of five reels or over. A good rule, followed by many successful writers, is to plan your story—estimating as well as you can according to what unusual effects or settings are called for—so that a five-reel subject, say, will not call for more than five times the outlay demanded by a single-reel picture. It is not an easy thing to do, we will admit; but you can do your best to figure the expense in this way. Many manufacturers are willing to pay out as much for a thoroughly good five-reel picture as some others would pay for a six- or seven-reel feature; if they do so in the case of *your* story so much the better for you, in the light of the additional credit you will receive for

having turned out an especially fine piece of work. The point is: Don't be too ready to add to the expense merely because it is a multiple-reel story. The test should be: Is the expensive scene or effect absolutely essential to a proper unfolding of your plot? If it is, include it; if not, leave it out or find as good a substitute effect as you can. In any event, omit expensive scenes for minor parts of your plot.

2. Considering the Expense of Settings

Do not write a scene into your scenario that will necessitate too much work for scenic artists, carpenters, and property men. A truly big theme is, of course, entitled to careful, and even elaborate, staging; but it is usually only necessary to set forth the big theme and describe the setting in a general way; the producer will do the rest. Do not be extravagant in your requirements. This should be one of your first considerations when you start to write a scene: could it be played as well in some other setting that would not require so much "staging?" Perhaps, in the setting that you thought of first, it might be necessary to use several extra people, thereby adding to the cost of production. No doubt it would be very pretty and effective to have Ralph make up his quarrel with Dorothy as she sits down close to the camera in the crowded ball room; but, if the play did not already contain a ball-room scene, could not the reconciliation be shown just as well in the library or on the street near her home or in a drawing-room scene where

only a few guests are assembled, the guests all being regular members of the stock company?

Some pictures calling for special properties and extra people fully justify the additional expenditure; others do not. He is a wise writer who knows his own script well enough to be able to judge.

3. How Some "Too Expensive" Scenes Were Taken

In a great many cases, pictures containing aëroplanes, burning oil wells, railroad wrecks, houses that are completely gutted by fire, and other exceptionally spectacular features, are the result of the merest chance. For example, a few years ago the Thanhouser studio at New Rochelle, N. Y., caught fire and burned to the ground. The fire was a spectacular one, as the chemical contents of the building burned like powder, and there were several explosions. The fire occurred at 1.30 o'clock in the afternoon, and many of the players were at lunch at their hotels when the alarm was turned in. But the players, the cameraman, and the director quickly got together, and even before the fire was well out they had produced a thrilling fire picture, "When the Studio Burned," in which was shown the rescue of the "Thanhouser Kid" by Miss Marguerite Snow, then leading woman of the company. Thus advantage was taken of an unfortunate happening to add to the fame of the Thanhouser company.

Again, it may happen that several scenes of a big fire are taken while it is in progress, and the film laid

aside until a suitable photoplay is either written by a staff-writer or sent in by an outside author. Then the picture is completed, the fire scenes previously taken being inserted between other scenes showing the action of the plot.

One of the most thrilling and realistic fire pictures ever produced was "The Incendiary Foreman," released by Pathé Frères early in 1908. It had a well-developed plot that kept the dramatic interest keyed up every moment, but the features of the film were the many thrillingly realistic fire scenes, in which the Parisian fire department battled with the flames while several enormous buildings were being destroyed. One of the earlier scenes depicted the yard of the Pathé factory, and showed a quarrel between the foreman and one of the workmen. The ensuing action led one to believe that this was the factory that was consumed by the flames, but one or two of the later scenes made it plain to those who could read French and who watched the picture closely that the actual fire scenes had been taken during the destruction of an immense oil refinery. Yet the combination of the rehearsed scenes and the views of the real and disastrous conflagration made a picture that drew record-breaking houses to every theatre where it was exhibited.

Again, whether or not the producing concern releases a weekly or semi-weekly current-events reel, every company at times makes use of portions of such pictures, either made by themselves or procured from other firms. In the same way, educational pictures of every kind are made use of—certain parts of them, that

is—to provide fitting and convincing atmosphere for original stories. When the Whartons put out their very fine patriotic serial, "The Eagle's Eye," written and produced with the intention of exposing the plots formed in the United States by agents of the Imperial German Government, the first episode was called "The Hidden Death," and showed on the screen exactly how, in all probability, the sinking of the *Lusitania* was brought about by Count von Bernstorff and his various agents. The actual advertisement placed in New York City newspapers by the German Embassy at Washington, warning all travelers that they sailed on steamers belonging to Great Britain at their own risk, as a state of war existed between that country and Germany, was shown on the screen, as were several photographs of newspaper first pages with news of the crime after it had been perpetrated. Also, the *Lusitania* was shown sailing down the North River toward the Upper Bay, starting on her last voyage. This picture, of course, was at least three years old at the time the film was shown in the theatres, and may have been much more than that, since many pictures of this and other great ocean liners have been made in years past, and at times when no one could possibly have guessed their ultimate fate.

Practically every photoplay of the Great War that has been released up to the present time has been made up in part of scenes taken on one of the fighting fronts, at the American, British or other training camps, or during street parades and military reviews, these pictures having first been made for news weeklies, official

war pictures, or for patriotic propaganda purposes. Fitted in as a part of a war story, they greatly enhance the effect of those scenes which are entirely the creation of the author's brain.

On one occasion, a certain Edison director was putting on a feature which showed—as originally written—the sinking in mid-ocean of a great liner. While rehearsing the scene on deck which showed the passengers taking to the life-boats, he made repeated experiments with certain lightning effects, none of which quite satisfied him. He also had some trouble with one of the made-to-order life-boats. Finally, rather disgusted with the way things were going, he decided to cut out the lowering-of-the-boats scene and to have a fire at sea instead of a mere foundering. In a very few minutes, with the aid of "smoke-pots" and "blow-torches" a thrilling burning-ship scene was made, with the people scrambling toward the life-boats. Later, several long-distance views of the burning of a real ocean vessel, made by the company several years before, were introduced with most convincing effect, while the action of the story was in no way interfered with on account of the change. The scene described, of course, was made in the studio, with a specially built deck scene. Had there been other scenes aboard ship needed in the story's working out, the director would undoubtedly have secured permission to take all the scenes needed aboard one of the ocean liners always to be found in the port of New York.

So it is that hundreds of pictures released every year contain thrilling, unusual, and beautiful effects

which the author has never dreamed of writing into his scenario, but which have been supplied by a careful director with a memory for what the company has made in the past. And the thing to be remembered, of course, is that while it is very easy for a director to use something which is already made and in the company's possession—or readily procurable from another company—it is not so easy, at times, *to make* the big scene or effect that the novice introduces into his story.

Leaving aside the staff-writers, in almost every company[1] there are one or two photoplaywrights; in many cases the leading man is also the director of the company, writing and producing a great many of the plays they turn out. Where this is so, that company is in a position to take advantage of any unforeseen happening or accident. Being in the vicinity of a railroad wreck, they hurry to the place and take the scenes they need. Then, probably many miles away, and on an entirely different railroad line, with the permission of the company and possibly at a slight extra expense, they take the other railroad scenes—perhaps a week after taking those at the scene of the wreck.

Thus the unthinking amateur writer, seeing the result of the producer's efforts on the screen, takes it for granted that the company has gone to the expense of buying up several old coaches and an engine or two and producing an actual wreck merely for the sake of supplying some thrilling situations in a railroad drama.

[1] "Company," as here used, refers to the group of players working under a certain director, several such groups making up the stock company maintained by the film manufacturing concern.

True, head-on collisions have been planned and pictured, box-cars have been thrown over embankments, automobiles have been burned, aëroplanes have been wrecked, and houses have been destroyed, to furnish thrilling episodes in the pictures produced by various companies, but unless the story itself fully justified the additional expense and trouble, it is safe to say that the company, having the opportunity to purchase some old engines and coaches cheap, took advantage of this to write and produce a picture in which their destruction could be featured—that is, the photoplay was the result of the special scene, and the scene was not made specially for that particular plot.

To repeat, in introducing scenes that call for additional expenditure on the part of the manufacturer, the question to ask yourself is, *will the resulting effect really justify the added cost of production?*

As a striking example of how unusual and—from the standpoint of what may be artificially arranged—seemingly impossible scenes may be used in photoplays, consider the following—and then avoid the introduction of such scenes unless you know *absolutely* just how your effect may be obtained.

The Vitagraph release, "A Wasted Sacrifice," [1] more fully described in the next chapter, contained a scene in which a young Indian woman, stepping upon a rattlesnake, was bitten, and died. One scene showed her walking along, with the papoose on her back, all unsuspecting of the danger that threatened. Then

[1] The synopsis of this photoplay is given in Chapter VIII.

came a close-up showing the rattler coiled with head raised. The next full-sized scene showed the woman just about to step upon the snake concealed in the grass. In the second close-up which followed, showing only the snake and the woman's moccasined feet, the reptile struck with startling swiftness and savageness. The whole effect was thrilling in the extreme—and we do not doubt that more than one young writer was tempted to write a story with a similar scene. But how often would a producer be able to obtain such an effect? It seems obvious that the scene was in stock and the play built around it, but the truth is that the scene was specially made. The snake was caught, and its poison extracted, and then the scenes were taken. In the close-up scene the snake was inside an enclosure stretched on the ground. The first close-up showed the snake, coiled. In the second, the girl was in the enclosure with the snake. But the close-up did not show the enclosure, of course. And rattlesnakes are not readily obtainable "props"!

4. Animal Actors

Another mistake frequently made by the beginner is in writing stories that require the assistance of trick animals. We know one motion-picture actor who, at the time when he was on the extra list of a well-known Chicago company, wrote to a New York producer that he would furnish the working scenarios for two or three plays in which his trick dog could work provided that he himself were allowed to direct the scenes in which the animal took part. He was told to go on,

and carried out his part of the contract as offered. The result was several very exceptional pictures in which his dog's clever work was featured. But how many writers are prepared not only to write the script but also to furnish the dog and direct its acting? It is better to leave the writing of such stories to some member of the company owning the trick animal.

The Selig Company maintains a large menagerie, as does also the Universal Company; and a script in which caged animals are used might be accepted by them. Even a story requiring animals that were unconfined might "get by;" but it would be advisable, in either case, first to try to find out whether the director who would take such a picture considered the story worth while writing. That is, we think the photoplaywright would do well—although no such suggestion has been offered by either company—to send a *short* synopsis of the story he intends to write, showing just how the animals would be made use of. We have no doubt that the editor would let you know if he considered the idea a good one; and if he did, you could complete your script or detailed synopsis. It would be understood, of course, that his approving your idea would in no way guarantee the acceptance of your script. But of one thing you might be sure: if your idea were not purchased, it would not be used at all, as every reputable company pays for everything they use.

5. Child Actors

What applies to animals applies equally to child

actors: it is always best, before submitting a story in which a child plays an important part, to be reasonably certain that the company has such a juvenile player, or that they can procure a child with the necessary ability to perform the part. Several concerns have as members of their stock companies child actors of marked ability. In some studios, however, the director finds it necessary to "send out" for clever children of whom he may know—sometimes the child has acted under his direction before; sometimes he has heard the reports from directors of other companies—and if there is doubt in the director's mind that the child can handle the part, your story may be rejected as a result.

6. Costume Plays

In the chapter on "What You Should Write" we discuss the question of writing historical dramas, which come under the head of costume plays. It should be said here that, merely as an economical consideration, you should always avoid sending scripts calling for special—and therefore expensive—costuming to any company unless you know that they are in the habit of producing plays of that nature. By studying the pictures you see on the screen you can easily learn what companies go in for costume or historical plays; such companies are always glad to receive really strong and interesting stories of this character from outside writers.

7. Lighting

We have already touched upon the use of special

lighting arrangements in special scenes, but it is well to say again that it is best to let the director decide how a scene shall be lighted. He will consider the matter from the standpoint of practicability and expense; you are very likely to think only of the effect. Don't be too ready to write scenes calling for verandas hung with electric lights in supposed night scenes, Japanese lanterns at garden parties, unique moonlight effects, and similar things that will make for expense—even if they are practicable.

Finally, economy should always be the guide followed by the author in writing his story. If, after it has been accepted, the director chooses to stage it with more than ordinary care and expense, so much the better. But the director and not the author will be the one to decide how it is to be staged. If the story is good, it will not be slighted in its production.

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT WRITE

1. The Work of the Censors

From the time that you begin to write moving-picture plays, one important fact must be borne constantly in mind: The National Board of Censorship inspects and passes on all films before they are permitted to be released, and this Board will not pass any subject it considers objectionable. It is not our province to discuss the methods of the censors in making decisions, though in some sections the local board carries the censorship idea to extremes, even barring some subjects that have already passed the National Board. It is safe to say, however, that the folly of hacking to pieces a film portraying Shakespeare's tragedy of "Macbeth," on the ground that it contained too many scenes showing murder and other crimes, will soon become apparent even to over-zealous police and other censors of certain cities. As Mr. W. Stephen Bush writes in *The Moving Picture World:* "A very small and a very short-sighted minority of motion picture manufacturers, together with occasional lapses of National Censorship," are responsible for the exceedingly silly and presumptuous system now existent in some localities.

It is because of this "small and short-sighted minority" that we offer this advice: Write as your conscience and a sense of decency as an individual and as a good citizen dictate. The chances are that then your photoplay will meet with no serious objection. Do not introduce a crime-scene into your picture simply because when you saw a similar scene in a photoplay it aroused a moment's thrill among the spectators. The fact that it passed the National Board and the local censorship committee—if your city has one—does *not* mean that it is the kind of picture the better class of theatre patrons want, and the better class ought to be set up in your mind as the judges of all you write. A bad example will not justify you in writing a play containing objectionable scenes. The safe ground is the best ground because it is right.

The following list of features disapproved by the National Board of Censorship gives a good general idea of the things that may be regarded as under the ban, not in one or two special cities, but throughout the country. It is not a copy of an official list, as, to the best of our knowledge, none such is sent out; it is merely a draft prepared by Mr. John F. Pribyl, then with the Selig Company, after he had had a conversation on the subject with the Secretary of the National Board, Mr. Walter Story, and courteously transmitted by Mr. Pribyl to the authors of this volume.

DISAPPROVED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD OF CENSORSHIP

The Unwritten Law: The Board does not recognize

the so-called unwritten law as a justification for the killing of any being.

Crime: 1. When crime is the obvious purpose of the picture—that is, when the whole story hinges on the perpetrated crime.

2. When the crime is repulsive and shocks the spectator.

3. The shooting in "cold blood" of any being.

4. Any crime that portrays a unique method of execution.

Suicide: The Board will not pass a picture in which there is a suicide or any suggestion of a suicide, with incidents leading thereto. The purpose of the Board is to prevent all suggestion of self-destruction to those who are morbidly inclined.

Burglary: There is no objection to a burglary scene in a picture so long as there is no actual demonstration of the act of burglarizing; for instance, the burglar may be shown entering through an open window, but must not be shown in the act of "jimmying" the window. He may be shown with his back to the audience, opening a safe and extracting therefrom money or papers, but he must not be shown opening the safe by any means known to the art of burglars.

Vulgarity: All vulgarity and suggestion must be avoided. For instance, flirtations with women who are unmistakably of easy virtue. Letters making appointments with such women are objectionable, as is any "rough-house" conduct with them.

Mischief: The Board objects to pictures that will suggest to the mind of youth acts of mischief, such as mutilation or destruction of property for the purpose of perpetrating a joke on someone, especially playing jokes on invalids or cripples.

Lynching: Lynching is only permissible when the incident happens in the days when Lynch Law was the only law, i. e., in the early days of the Far West when the Vigilantes were the only effective means of enforcing order.

2. Other Objectionable Subjects

The foregoing, of course, is not a complete list, as points are coming up continually. For instance, scenes showing kidnapping are forbidden by the police of many cities, and the introduction of that form of crime into a film story is frowned upon by the National Board. The point is that scenes of crime and violence are not absolutely barred, nor are offenses against the moral law, but where permitted these must not be presented offensively, and they must be *essential* to the story, rather than the *purpose* of the play. This is a difficult point which nothing but common sense and experience can perfectly interpret.

As an example, a story written about a murder or a robbery will not be passed, but such an incident may be allowed in a story in which it is not the leading feature. In any event, the incident must serve to point a moral and not serve as a spectacle.

Another thing to remember is that—aside from the moving-pictures exhibited in the various "regular"

theatres—dozens of incidents which are shown on the regular stage without being questioned in any way, would never be allowed on the screen. This is partly due to the fact that such a large percentage of the attendants of moving-picture theatres are children and undiscriminating adults. The writer of fiction entering the field of photoplay writing will do well to bear this further fact in mind: the very incident that might be the means of selling a story to a certain magazine might be the cause of a rejection if introduced into a moving-picture plot. The photoplay has standards all its own.

"One type of the unpleasant drama," says a writer in the *Photoplay Magazine,* "is the kind showing scenes of drinking and wild debauchery, where some character becomes drunk and slinks home to his sickly wife, beats her, and then, finally, after reaching the last stages of becoming a sot, suddenly braces up and reforms." The same writer also remarks: "The only time that murder should be shown, *and that very delicately,* is either in a detective drama or else in good tragedy, where the removal of some character is essential to the plot." "Every one of Shakespeare's tragedies tells of crime," says an editorial in *The Moving Picture World,* "but does not exploit it, and never revels in the harrowing details to produce a thrill."

It is not to be denied that careless and unthinking directors are responsible for a good deal of what is objectionable on the screen. At the same time—and this is especially true of comedy subjects—the director is merely, as a rule, carrying out the author's *sugges-*

tions, if not his actual directions. The best way is not to give the director the opportunity to adopt objectionable features—leave even questionable incidents out of your photoplay.

For example, the elopement is legitimate moving-picture material, provided it is not introduced in such a way as to instill mischief into the minds of young men and women. At least one picture was produced a year or so ago which showed two high-school girls eloping with a couple of young rakes who in another part of the photoplay "registered" that they were by no means the kind of young men who would ever have received the sanction of the girls' parents to marry their daughters. Such a picture may have been conceived innocently enough, but as a subject that would be shown to thousands of young people all over the world it was decidedly deserving of censure. And yet some of the very incidents that served to make the picture doubly objectionable in the eyes of grown people, especially fathers and mothers, might have been the result of the director's unthinkingly adding certain scenes that served to portray young men in a bad light—incidents which were not even thought of by the author when he planned his picture of a youthful escapade. We sympathize with the lovers when Dorothy's father refuses to let her marry Jack, to whom she is plainly devoted. But when, in another scene, we see Jack wasting his time in pool-rooms or lounging in a saloon, we give the father credit for being a good judge of character, and not simply a harsh and stubborn guardian.

Writers should remember that even though a film is passed by the National Board, if it gets into a city in which the local censorship board objects to one or two scenes, these scenes will be literally cut out for exhibition in that city. Afterwards, they may be put back; but if this happens in several communities, the film is likely to be shortened by many feet, since in cutting and re-splicing each cut means the loss of at least two "frames," or pictures, and even more if the operator does not know his business—not to mention the loss of the actual scenes cut out. Suppose that two or three of a writer's "strong" scenes are cut when his picture is shown—in Detroit, for instance—the result on the screen is more likely to become an illogical and incoherent jumble than the powerful "drama with a punch" he had intended it to be. But "Censorship realizes," says Mr. A. W. Thomas, in the *Photoplay Magazine*, "as does every editor and author, that morality is to be desired, and to this end, crime or suggestion of crime is presented, as a rule, to convey the moral. 'Crime for crime's sake' is to be condemned. Sensationalism and forbidden themes are seldom seen nowadays."

Aside from murder and suicide, why is it that so many young authors imagine that to be strong a story must have at least one violent or tragic death-scene? That there are hundreds of gripping stories, pictures with the biggest kind of "punch," in which no death or suggestion of death is shown, is well-known to every photoplay patron whose mind and heart are in good working order. And yet editors are every day

returning scripts in which a murder, a suicide, a death as the result of a duel, or a death arising from disease or accident, is shown—all for no other reason than that the writer imagines he is thereby producing a strong drama.

3. Depressing Dramas

Death in a picture is neither undesirable nor out of place—*provided it is necessary to the proper and inevitable development of the plot.* But the mistaken idea that to snuff out a human life in a thrilling or a heart-rending manner, when there is really no logical necessity for it, makes a picture either strong or dramatic is responsible for scores of unaccepted scripts. Yet it would not be well to try to apply to all picture stories Mr. George Cohan's motto, "Always leave them laughing," for, as every intelligent exhibitor knows, and as a certain producer once said, "they come to weep as well as to laugh." The point that seems to have escaped many young writers is this: There is very often a more decided, a more convincing, and a far more welcome, "punch" in a scene which shows the saving of a human life than there is in one which shows a death, even of the most unworthy character in the cast. To have your villain nursed back to life by the man whom he has so persistently and cruelly persecuted, and then to have him show the change of heart that one would expect in him in the circumstances, will be far more dramatic and gripping in the eyes of an intelligent audience than to have your hero

"hurl the black-hearted ruffian to his doom" over a cliff a thousand feet high.

There is a distinction, with a very decided difference, between the picture that fills the spectators with gloom and the one that simply allows them to have what many women would call "a good cry." "It is a great thing to be able to lift the spectators out of their seats with a big, gripping melodrama," remarks Mr. Sargent, "but it is a far more creditable thing to send them home with a tear in their eyes while a smile hovers about their lips."

4. The Use of Deadly Weapons

It is understood, of course, that the use of guns, knives, and other weapons is seldom objected to by the censors when they are employed in a historical picture, or one that shows pioneer life. The trouble is that some young writers, knowing that they are granted more license in this direction when doing "Western stuff," make the mistake of abusing this liberty. Mr. R. R. Nehls, of the American Film Company, says: "The most noticeable fault with manuscripts dealing with Western life is the natural inclination to run too much to gun play, stagecoach robberies, etc. Please remember that we do not wish to distort conditions in the great West—rather we seek to portray it as it really exists today."

Mr. Nehls, it will be noticed, says "the great West . . . as it really exists today." It should be apparent to any writer that in turning out stories of the present-

day West there is even less excuse for promiscuous gun-play than in a story, say, of California in the days of the Forty-Niners. But Indian massacres, soldier warfare, Indian and cowboy fights, usually come under the head of "historical" subjects and are therefore permissible.

5. Plays Offensive to Classes of Patrons

It seems scarcely possible that any intelligent photo-play writer would introduce into one of his stories an incident calculated to offend the religious or political faith of any patron, and yet in the past different pictures of this kind have been the cause of more than one unthinking moving-picture theatre manager's losing some of his best patrons. People as a rule have no objection to being preached to in a mild and entertaining way when they go to a picture show, but they do object to having their feelings hurt. A man who is over-fond of drink may sit through a play on the screen in which the evil results of intoxication are depicted and come away filled with a determination to reform his way of living, but the man who after paying his admission is asked to sit through five or more reels of film almost every foot of which is a shock to his religious or his political sensibilities will come away filled only with the determination to avoid that theatre in the future, if not, indeed, to eschew moving-pictures entirely.

During 1911 and the early part of 1912 several pictures were released, both by European and American manufacturers, which were so objected to by Roman

Catholic picture-patrons that not only were they suppressed but the whole film-manufacturing industry was aroused and put on its guard against producing more pictures of this kind. Here is a rule of photoplay writing that you must not violate: Do not offend the religious beliefs of a *single patron* if you wish to retain the good will of the editors and manufacturers. And have you stopped to think how broad that statement really is? Have you taken into consideration the many different nationalities, with their widely different creeds and religious convictions, which see the pictures daily put upon the market? As one critic says: "The photoplay film goes to Europe and Australia and South Africa. Some of them even get to China; so you can realize that what may seem foolish to you may be sacred to someone else, and exhibitors have to be careful."

To say that you must be careful not to write stories that will be likely to arouse the ire of certain photoplay patrons because of the way a political theme is handled does not mean that you cannot introduce political themes at all. If, for instance, you have a particularly good suffragist story—one which contains both heart and human interest—there is little doubt that it would sell. Several such pictures have been shown in the past year or two. Or if you have a story in which the leading male character is a Socialist, it may be appreciated by many photoplay-goers without giving offense to those whose views do not coincide with the hero's. But, to quote the editor of *The Coming Nation,* stories are not wanted "where the

hero arises and makes a soap-box speech on Socialism, converting all by-standers." And at all times you must keep in mind that, no matter what political theme you exploit in your story, heart-interest must predominate if you wish it to sell—another way of saying that unless you are sure that you have a very strong and unusual story, it is best to leave out politics. That form of journalism which is best known as muck-raking is also out of place in the pictures.

Few films, however, outside of the sectarian subjects which were the cause of so much disturbance a year or so ago, have given displeasure to so many people as those—fortunately, they have not been many—which revealed and held up to the public the secret and dark sides in the lives of famous men and women of history. "There are some things that are sacred," says a writer in *The Moving Picture World,* "even from the hand of the most circumspect of picture makers." It is a source of regret that even a shadow of reproach should be cast upon distinguished men, particularly when the question of blame is debatable, as when, for instance, a picture portraying the love affair between Sir John Millais, the artist, and Ruskin's wife, was actually produced by a well-known company.

No matter what the opportunity to produce what seems to you to be a strong or interesting story, never offend against good taste. "Plays that antagonize the finer element in an audience," says Mr. Louis Reeves Harrison, "had better never be shown at all. There is nothing funny in what is cruel, though vulgar brutality

in a play may get a laugh from a few who have not yet emerged from primitive egoism."

That last sentence should constantly be borne in mind.

A certain film, "Adrift," released back in 1912, showed an incident that in real life would have been impossible. The rejected suitor of a woman who is afterwards seen on the downward path seeks to relieve his lonely existence by the adoption of a child. Because a certain little girl in an orphan asylum bears a striking resemblance to the woman he has loved and lost, he decides to adopt her. And he does; they are seen leaving together, the child being turned over to its new guardian in the most off-hand way imaginable. Of course, later, the child, having grown to womanhood, falls in love with and marries her guardian; but in real life how little chance there would be of a foundling institution's giving one of its girl charges over to a young bachelor in this informal manner, if, indeed, he were allowed to adopt her at all. Of course, it is not always possible to say whether the script for such a picture was the work of an outside writer or whether it was written by the director himself. But it sometimes happens that a picture *is* produced *because* it was written by the director himself, whereas the same story, sent to the editor by an outside writer, would be returned with a warning to avoid similar scenes or situations in the future.

The difference between the photoplay and prose fiction, or even the regular drama, is illustrated by the so-called problem plays and novels. These are accept-

able mainly because their themes can be explained from every point of view, and treated in a manner that renders them less objectionable, when skillful dialogue and discussion are used in telling the story, than if they were to be acted in pantomime. Besides, to give the same story in motion pictures would necessitate the use of more leaders and other inserts than would be practicable, even in a feature picture, unless the director were to risk offending the public, if not the Censorship Board, by putting on scenes that, insufficiently explained, would be far too risqué for the photoplay stage. Furthermore, when there are so many good, pleasant, and interesting themes to choose from, why elaborate what is unpleasant or morally objectionable?

6. Themes Unsuitable to the Producing Company

In the chapter on the limitations of the photoplay stage we have already said something about the inadvisability of calling (in your scenario) for elaborate snow- and rain-storm effects. But of course it is another matter to plan stories with winter or with summer backgrounds. Take into consideration that most of the Eastern companies, once the winter season is at hand, look for stories that may be done mostly in the studios, with interior settings. If the company has a branch studio in California or in Florida—facts which you can easily learn from the trade publications—they will very probably take suitable stories calling for outdoor scenes. As the winter season approaches its end you begin to offer scripts that call for exterior scenes,

though, of course, there are some scenes which it would not be possible to do until summer is well advanced.

It is impossible here to lay down any exact rules for submitting to any company; you must be guided by your good judgment and your acquired knowledge of how the company to which you submit your scripts has its field-forces distributed. But in order to make scripts acceptable for production by a company that has a field-force working, say, in the Adirondacks, it is necessary to get your stories to them in good time. Therefore, post yourself concerning the movements of the various companies, and when you learn that a certain concern has a field-company in the West Indies, send them the best script you have or can write, suited to the locality in which they are working. If it is accepted, you may be sure that the editor will be very glad to keep you informed as to how long they are going to stay. In that way you will avoid sending to a company a story with a Jamaican background when the field-company has been moved to the Delaware Water Gap region.

7. Hackneyed Themes

Here is a list of subjects no longer wanted by the editors—unless the theme is given a decidedly new twist—because they have become hackneyed from being done so often. Many such lists have been printed in the various motion-picture trade-papers and the different magazines for writers. We give the

tabooed themes that have so far been listed, and others drawn from different sources. A careful study of this list may save you from wasting your time writing a story that has already been done—perhaps two or three times, in one form or another—in every studio.

(1) The brother and sister, orphaned in infancy, parted by adoption and reunited in later life. They fall in love, only to discover the blood relationship.

(2) The little child stolen by gypsies, and restored to her family in later life, generally by means of a favorite song.

(3) The discharged workman who goes to do injury to his former employer, but who performs some rescue instead and gets his job back.

(4) The poor man who attends a fashionable dinner. He conceals in his clothing delicacies for his sick wife. A ring or other valuable is lost. He alone of the party refuses to be searched. The valuable is found and his story comes out.

(5) The man who assumes his brother's crime for the sake of the girl he loves, and who, he thinks, loves the brother.

(6) The child who reunites parted parents or prevents a separation.

(7) Baby's shoes. Edison, Vitagraph, Universal and other companies have worked out all the sentiment attached to them. Bannister Merwin, Robert E. Coffey and other authors have reunited separated couples by means of baby's shoes. Don't do it any more.

(8) Two suitors for the hand of a girl. They go to one of the parents to decide, or she gives them a common task to perform. One wins by foul means. He is found out, and she marries the other.

(9) The convict who escapes and robs an innocent man of his clothes, thereby causing another to appear temporarily as the jail-bird.

(10) The story of the girl's name and address written on the egg which is relegated to cold storage for twenty years, then to be discovered by a love-lorn man who seeks out the writer, who by this time has at least one unromantic husband and a brood of children.

(11) The pathetic "Mother" play in which Thanksgiving and pumpkin pies tug hard at the heart-strings.

(12) The play in which the rich crippled child is contrasted with the poor strong child, and in which the two are brought together and exchange confidences —and money.

(13) The husband jealous of his wife's brother, whom he has never seen.

(14) The burglar who breaks into a house, to be confronted by his own child, who has been adopted by the family.

(15) The policeman who calls on the cook and removes his hat and coat, which are used by another.

(16) The child who reunites parents and children separated through an unapproved marriage.

(17) The child who redeems the criminal or who saves the discouraged from the downward plunge.

(18) The employee who gets an interest in the busi-

ness, and his employer's daughter, either with or without opposition from the foreman or the junior partner

(19) The bad small boy.

(20) The sheriff who is rescued by the outlaw and who later allows him to escape, or prevents his being lynched.

(21) The revenue officer who falls in love with the moonshiner's daughter, and who is forced to choose between love and duty.

(22) The Southern boy who enlists in the Federal army, and is cast out by his father for so doing. Or the young Northerner who, acting as a Federal spy, falls in love with a Southern girl, the daughter of a Confederate officer. There are dozens of variations of the Civil War "brother against brother" plot, but all have been done so often that, unless you can give such a theme a decidedly new "twist," it is much better not to send it out. And note that merely to give the old theme a "Great War" setting is *not* to render it more acceptable.

(23) Stories requiring too much trick photography, and stories based upon "love pills," "foolish powders," and other "influences."

"Editors and public tired long ago of the poor boy whose industry at last brought him the hand of his employer's daughter; the pale-faced, sweet-eyed young thing whose heroism in stamping out a fire enabled her to pay off the mortgage; the recovery of the missing will; the cruel step-mother; answering a prayer which has been overheard; the strange case of mistaken

identity; honesty rewarded; a noble revenge; a child's influence; and so on to a long-drawn-out end." [1]

In avoiding trite subjects the surest teachers are common sense, a wide reading, the constant study of the photoplays seen on the screen, a friendly critic, and the printed rejection slip. *And do not forget this most important point:* It is not so much the time-worn *theme* that makes a story hackneyed as it is the threadbare *development* of the theme. A new "twist," a fresh surprise, coming as the climax to an old situation, may redeem its hackneyed character. But when you can combine a fresh theme with a new treatment you have reached the apex of originality. Time spent in working on unhackneyed lines will save you many later heartaches.

8. Inconsistent Situations

A word or two concerning inconsistencies in film stories. While the inconsistencies and absurdities occasionally seen on the screen are often traceable to the director alone, the writer must do his share toward eliminating what is incorrect or out of place. Take for instance the Red Cross in war-pictures. The introduction of the Red Cross into American Civil War pictures was something that one of the present writers had commented upon and criticized two or three years before Mr. Herbert Hoagland, of Pathé Frères American company, wrote his helpful little

[1] *J. Berg Esenwein, Writing the Short-Story.*

book on the technique of the photoplay[1], but, since Mr. Hoagland puts it so comprehensively in that work, what he says is quoted here:

"In a Civil War story the scenario called for a field hospital with the Red Cross flag flying from a staff. Well, the Red Cross wasn't organized until the closing year of the war, and then it was done in Switzerland. The Southerners and the Yankees never saw this emblem of mercy *during the whole four years of strife.*"

Following the foregoing paragraph in his book, Mr. Hoagland speaks of another script in which an officer in Confederate uniform is informed by a courier—in Confederate uniform—that war had been declared between the North and the South. "But," the Pathé censor of scripts remarks, "there was no gray uniform of the Confederacy before the C. S. A. was formed!"

As one critic has remarked, "Screen credit for the author may not bring him the credit for which he is looking." In other words, if the director bungles a scene or allows some historical or other inaccuracy to creep into the picture, the blame may be placed by the unthinking spectator on the author—or even, in case of the picture's being an adaptation of a novel, on the writer who prepared the continuity, or scenario. Thus, while what Mr. Hoagland wrote was written in 1912, the Red Cross flag was seen waving bravely in Paralta's "Madame Who?", produced in 1918, and we feel sure that neither Mr. Harold MacGrath, who

[1] Herbert Case Hoagland, *How to Write a Photoplay.*

wrote the novel, nor Mr. Monte M. Katterjohn, the staff-writer who wrote the scenario, was responsible for the error.

So it will be seen that the photoplaywright may easily find himself under the fire not only of the professional critic, but also of the lay patron and of his brother writers. Do not, therefore, risk anything that may, so to speak, make it easier for the director to "go wrong." To quote Davy Crockett's motto, "Be sure you're right; then go ahead."

As an example of what may happen it you fail to observe this warning, consider the Vitagraph release, "A Wasted Sacrifice," referred to in the previous chapter.[1] The big "punch" in this story, as already pointed out, was where the young squaw steps on the concealed rattlesnake. Women in the audience screamed; men felt the proverbial "cold chill" run down their spines. Then came the climax, in which the young Westerner, hoping to save the life of the papoose, takes it away from the dead mother and hurries back to meet the doctor-sheriff who is pursuing him with the posse. The doctor tells him that the child is dead; his sacrifice—from which the story derives its title—has been unnecessary. The poison, drawn from the breast of the stricken woman by the nursing child, has killed the baby. A real "punch," indeed! But wait. A prominent physician in an Eastern city writes to the producing company protesting that it is impossible for a child to draw poison into its system in the manner described. And the physician

[1] See synopsis in Chapter VIII.

knows! In other words, what happened in the picture could not happen in real life. The backbone of the plot has been broken! Seven in ten people might not know the difference; they would never question the probability of the scene. The other three in ten *would know,* and, seeing your name on the film, would put you down as a first-class "nature faker," or else as a very careless and badly informed writer. And remember that even though the director may be the one most to blame for not taking the trouble to verify the action introduced into your story before putting it on, *you* will be the one blamed by those in the studio, and your next story will undoubtedly be looked at askance, and probably rejected.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT YOU SHOULD WRITE

"With inventiveness and imagination the most commonplace, the everyday-life subject, such as the ills and cares we have to bear, becomes, by a proper exposition of human nature under those conditions, a story both entertaining and instructive. But *entertaining* first, instructive second; to *try* to be instructive is to cease to be entertaining.

"The strength of a story consists in the eloquence, vividness, and sincerity with which a given problem in human life or character is presented. Human nature is made up of all sorts of traits—selfishness, cupidity, self-sacrifice, courage, loyalty. All life is made up . . . of a compromise between elements in the struggle for happiness. These elements make for the story, happiness being the chief factor for which humanity is searching."

Though written for short-story writers, these words from an article by Mr. Floyd Hamilton Hazard are so true, and so applicable to the writing of photoplays, that we reproduce them here.

Substantially similar ideas were advanced by Mr. Daniel Frohman, the theatrical impresario, in an interview in the New York *Sun,* and no one will doubt the

close relationship which exists between the general principles of plot-structure as applied to the "legitimate" drama and to the photoplay.

We may now see the first big element in all vitally dramatic themes:

1. The Human Appeal

"Your script," wrote a certain editor in returning a young writer's photoplay, "needs to be introduced to the 'H. I.' twins—Heart Interest and Human Interest. Those two elements are responsible for the sale of more manuscripts than anything else with which the writer has to do."

In choosing a theme for your photoplay, then, constantly bear in mind the great truth that, no matter how original, how interesting, or how cleverly constructed your plot may be, it will be sadly lacking unless it contains a goodly percentage of one or both of these desirable qualities. The frequently-quoted formula of Wilkie Collins, "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait," simply sums up the proper procedure when you set out to win the interest and sympathy of the spectators. "The greatest aid in selling scripts is the injection of the human-interest bits. Every effective bit of business concisely told helps the sale because it helps the editor," Mr. Sargent remarks in one of his criticisms. "Reach your readers' hearts and brains," says Arthur S. Hoffmann, editor of *Adventure,* in *The Magazine Maker.* And then, after citing the dictum of Wilkie Collins, he adds: "Make

'em hate, like, sympathize, think. Give them human nature, not merely names of characters."

When all is said, you can hope to reach the minds of the masses only by first reaching their hearts.

2. Writing for All Classes

Notwithstanding the great advances in the art of moving-picture production during the last few years, and the corresponding improvement in the film-stories shown, the great mass of photoplay patrons are still, as they always were, of the middle class. Better pictures have gradually drawn into the picture theatres a more highly educated type of patron, but very few exhibitors would stay in business if the middle-class spectators were to discontinue their attendance. The average working man can take his little family to the picture theatre, say once a week, for fifty cents, whereas it would cost him about that sum for one poor seat in a first-class regular theatre. Hence the immense popularity of the picture theatre, and hence too the necessity for effort on the part of the theatre manager to please *all* his patrons.

First, of course, he must please the majority, but he must by no means overlook the tastes of the minority. Every man, as the wise proprietor knows, enjoys most what he understands best. The plain people are not necessarily the unintelligent ones, for the working man can both understand and enjoy pictured versions of Dante's *Inferno* and Sophocles' *Œdipus Rex*, but he will feel more at home while watching a picture of con-

temporary American life; and who shall say, provided the photoplay be a good one, that he is not receiving as much profit therefrom as from the film version of either of the classics!

The really successful photoplaywright is nothing if not versatile. Unless he is content to have a very limited market, he more than any other type of professional writer must be able to write for all classes.

Furthermore, he must be able to write on a variety of themes. The photoplaywright who can produce only Western dramas, or stories dealing with slum life, will find his sales averaging very low as compared with the author who can construct a society drama, a Western story, a photoplay of business life, a story of the Kentucky mountains, or still other types. To be able to write photoplays that will appeal to every class of photoplay patron is the supreme test of the photoplaywright.

These words of a celebrated French novelist and playwright, Ludovic Halévy, are worthy of attention:

"We must not write simply for the refined, the blasé, and the squeamish. We must write for that man who goes there on the street with his nose in his newspaper and his umbrella under his arm. We must write for that fat, breathless woman whom I see from my window, as she climbs painfully into the Odéon omnibus. We must write courageously for the *bourgeois*, if it were only to try to refine them, to make them less *bourgeois*. And if I dared, I should say that we must write even for fools."

3. A High Quality of Imagination Demanded

Another well-known French dramatist, Marcel Prevost, who is a photoplaywright as well, in a recent issue of the Paris *Figaro* replied to a question whether motion pictures are harmful to the legitimate theatre, by stating that, while he likes the pictures, their authors are lacking in imagination.

That there is a great deal of truth in what M. Prevost says seems to be proved by the fact that when famous playwrights and best-selling authors have supplied photoplay plots to the manufacturers, they have been exceptionally well paid. We refer, of course, to stories specially written for the photoplay stage, for when a film manufacturer produces a story by a well-known fiction writer, which originally appeared in novel or in short-story form, the manufacturer does business with the author's publishers, unless the author has specifically reserved for himself all dramatic rights —a practice which, by the way, is becoming more and more general.

An editorial in *Motography* says: "The best motion picture dramas produced today are reproductions of literary classics. These films do not achieve immortality; they merely further assure the immortality of the original work. Why cannot a photodrama be produced that is fine enough to live on its own merit—why must the picture always seem to be secondary while literature and the drama continue to furnish the primary motives?

"The answer lies in the peculiar requirements of

Arrangement of Electric Lights in a Photoplay Studio

An Actor's Dressing Room in the Selig Studio

photoplay authorship. The writer of printed fiction is a master of *words*. He revels in artful phrases and unique constructions. He woos immortality not by his plots, but by his clever handling of words—his 'style'." And then the editor goes on to say that the photodrama will become great when it has developed its own great men. "The photoplay author of fame," he says, "must be a specialist."

This also is true; but at the same time he must, as in any other profession, first of all be a student. He must serve his apprenticeship; and while he *is* serving his apprenticeship he must cultivate the imagination which M. Prevost declares to be so essential.

Imagination cannot be developed by remaining in a rut. Experience is not only the best teacher, but the very finest developer of thought, and of a vivid and facile imagination. Thus constant practice causes the building of plots to become a sort of second nature.

Granting that you have the technical skill to develop the plots you evolve, the question which you have to answer is: What are the most suitable themes for photoplays?

No one can give you such a list, though he may do what has been attempted in another chapter—furnish a moderately full list of what *not* to choose as themes. Some general positive principles, however, are important, and these are now to be considered.

4. Write of What You Know

The fact that the market is wide makes it the less

excusable when a writer courts rejection by attempting themes with which he is not familiar. If you live on an Eastern or Middle-West farm, or in a small town, remember that—especially between the months of May and September—the film companies almost without exception are looking for good stories of country life. Then why try to write stories of business life in a large city, of society, of theatrical or circus life, or even of the far West, until you have succeeded with a few stories that might easily be set within a short distance of where you live? Correct and faithful local color, at times, has much to do with selling a story, though you always need a good idea and a clever plot.

The same rule, naturally, should be followed by the young writer whose home is in a large city. If you can turn out a good, original story truthfully portraying New York's East Side, Broadway, or Wall Street; Chicago's "Loop" district; the social and political life of Washington, or any other such background, there is an editor waiting to purchase that story.

All this is *not* to say that you must write only of things which are, or have been, within the range of your personal experience. Many a writer has successfully built his story on well-verified second-hand knowledge. If you are not familiar with the subject at first-hand, and cannot get direct, personal information, get the knowledge from books and periodicals, ***but get it exactly—squeeze the last drop of information*** from the subject. If there is no library in your town, search your own as well as borrowed books and magazines until you find at least enough correct data to

enable you to turn out a script that will not betray second-hand knowledge. Jules Verne had only indirect knowledge of most of the countries which he depicted, yet to read his books one would believe that he had travelled everywhere. Because he had read up on and investigated his subjects he was able to produce such thoroughly convincing, and always interesting, books as "A Tour of the World in Eighty Days," "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," and "The Clipper of the Clouds," in which he wrote, and apparently authoritatively, of almost every country on the globe.

Until your work is pretty well known by the editors, it is just as well not to attempt to write historical dramas. But if you do write them, the greatest care must be taken to adhere closely to facts, especially in composing scripts in which famous historical personages figure. Three or four years ago a certain company that made a specialty of two- and three-part historical, Western, and military dramas, was called to account by an army officer in Washington for having brought out a photoplay of pioneer life which held up a well-known officer of the United States army in a rather bad light by making him responsible for an act of great injustice to a famous Indian chieftain. The author of the photoplay—whether a staff-writer or a free lance—was doubtless unaware that he was doing an injustice to the memory of a gallant and kind-hearted American soldier; but, however the picture came to be written, it elicited the strong disapproval

of someone *who knew,* and who did not hesitate to tell the makers that a mistake had been made.

Manufacturers have to be careful; they cannot afford to offend anyone. Moreover, the motion picture has come to be looked upon as a great educational factor, and no picture can be truly educational that is not strictly accurate. If you want to write historical photoplays after you have become known to the editors, very well; but be sure that you adhere closely to historical facts. It is far better to spend a week in the reference room of the public library than to have to suffer a rebuke from a manufacturer, even though the director be also to blame for not being familiar with the subject before attempting to make the picture. And the loss of your prestige may prove harder to bear than the rebuke.

5. Write on What Interests You

Next in importance to writing on a subject with which you are familiar is to write about that with which you are in sympathy. You cannot interest your audience unless you yourself are interested in your theme when the story is written. If you would arouse fire in your spectators you must first feel fire within you. To write a story merely because it is timely is not to do yourself justice. Suppose, for instance, it is about time for a new president to go into office. It may occur to you that to send in a script bearing upon that timely subject will be a sure way of "coaxing a check from the editor." You have some slight knowl-

edge of politics and of Washington life, but you are not particularly interested in either. You are, however, anxious to sell a script, so you read up on the subject and work up a photoplay. The chances are that you will continue to own the script, for you did not put the snap into it that you would have done had you been both familiar with your theme and genuinely interested in it.

6. Write on Unusual Themes

Many a writer is deterred from developing an unusual theme for fear that no company will be found to produce it. Enough has been said on this subject to warn the photoplaywright against writing impracticable scenes. But with this limitation in view every effort should be made to strike into untravelled fields. In a day when most of the big manufacturers have two or three, or even more, field-companies operating in different parts of the country, when almost every maker of films has an Eastern and a Western organization, and when several companies have a "globe-trotting" troupe working in some distant part of the world, there is very little chance of a thoroughly good and desirable photoplay plot's failing to find acceptance, provided it is intelligently marketed. No matter where you may live, no matter what you may write of, if it is good it will sell—*some* editor is waiting for it. But you must find that editor.

7. Write Stories Requiring Only Action

In selecting your theme, ask yourself if either

dialogue or description may not be really required to bring out the theme satisfactorily. If such is the case, abandon the theme. The comparatively few inserts permitted cannot be relied upon to give much aid—the chief reliance *must* be pantomime.

For this reason it is inadvisable to write detective stories, unless you have a plot that can be easily and convincingly told in action. The average fictional story of this class depends more upon dialogue and the author's explanation of the sleuth's methods of deduction than upon rapid and gripping action. In a fictional detective story, the crime usually has happened before the story opens. In a film story, this would be impracticable, unless a long explanatory insert were introduced either before or after the first scene or two. But long inserts are not wanted, even in multiple-reel stories. Since events in a photoplay must appear in chronological order, you cannot depict murder without showing the murderer in the act, and that will soon bring you counter to the censors.

Aside from the consideration of the censorship is this point: in a fictional detective story the real murderer is not revealed, in most cases, until the last chapter. In the photoplay, on the other hand, it would be necessary to show the spectator almost at the first who the real murderer is—the other characters in the picture, and not the spectators, being the ones in doubt as the story progressed.

This is a difficult condition to bring about effectively. Still, it can be done, and there is a chance for a writer who can produce logical and interesting detective

scripts, as there is always a market for any uncommon theme that is both original and handled with technical correctness.

An author who is anonymous has said: "While the story may have for a plot a subject involving complication, or mystery, each scene must be easily understood, or the audience, taxed by trying to fathom motives or emotions with which it is unfamiliar, or with which it is not in sympathy, loses the thread of the story, and consequently pronounces the photoplay lacking in interest. Remembering the brevity of the film drama, compactness and simplicity in every feature are to be desired. It does not require a great cast of characters nor unusually spectacular scenic work to produce the big idea. The depths of human woe and suffering, or the very heights of joy and attainment, can be pictured in a flash. The dramatic story should consist of a strong and preferably unique plot, simple and direct in its appeal to the heart, and expressed or conveyed to the audience by a logical sequence of episodes or incidents, all having direct bearing on the story, and each one of sufficient strength to hold the attention of the spectators. The story must be human, the characters and their motives and actions human and true to life. *The drama is perfect as it reflects a correct imitation of nature.*"

8. Write Mainly of Characters That Arouse the Spectator's Sympathy

Each hero must have his opposite, as each great cause must have its protagonist and antagonist. In-

deed, as we have seen, it is this warfare that makes all drama possible. But it will not do to glorify the doer of evil deeds and thus corrupt the sympathies of the spectators. The hero and not the "villain" must swing the sympathies of those who see. Be certain, therefore, that pity for, and even sympathy with, a wrong-doer is not magnified, through the action of your play, into admiration by the onlookers, for in the photoplay as in the legitimate drama the leading character may be a great offender. This way danger lies, however, and you must walk with extreme caution, or the censors "will catch you—if you don't watch out!"—to say nothing of the lashings of your own conscience.

Without repeating what was said in Chapter XVI regarding the introduction of crime into film stories, we would impress upon the photoplaywright the necessity for always having a fully sufficient, though not necessarily a morally justifiable, motive for any crime that is introduced in a story; besides, the introduction of a crime must be necessary to the action and not a mere spectacular scene. But remember that it is not sufficient to avoid "crime without motive;" the motive must be one which will, after the crime has been committed, leave no doubt in the mind of the spectator that the crime was virtually inevitable, if not absolutely unavoidable. If it is the hero of the story who commits the crime, the very greatest care must be taken to show that he had a really powerful motive for his act, if he is to have the sympathy—though not the approval—of the audience after yielding to tempta-

tion.[1] This, of course, does not refer to deeds of violence which are really not only excusable but actually right, in the circumstances—like the killing of an attacking desperado in self-defense.

As an example of the point we are trying to emphasize, take a story like "The Bells," the play in which Sir Henry Irving appeared so often. Mathias the innkeeper, who later became the Burgomaster, was a character, who, by reason of Irving's superb art, won and held the sympathies of the audience from the start. Yet after Mathias had murdered the Polish Jew and robbed him of his belt of gold, even the art of Irving could not have made us sympathize with the character had we not been shown that Mathias was urged on to his crime—a crime for which he was constantly tortured ever afterward, and which occasioned his tragic death—by two very compelling motives. His primary motive was the urgent need of money. But he had a two-fold need of money: he had been notified by the landlord that he must pay his over-due rent or be turned out of his home; and he had been told by the doctor that unless he could immediately remove his sick wife to a milder climate she would certainly die. Thus, impelled by the thought that only by the speedy acquisition of sufficient money could he hope to save the life of his wife, he commits the deed which he would never have committed had his only motive been the necessity for raising money to pay the rent. Mathias was esteemed by his neighbors as an honest

[1] To make this basic motive clear, natural and unforced is what we call good motivation in fiction and drama.

man; he was a man whose conscience smote him terribly when he was contemplating the murder of the Jew; and after the crime had been committed—fifteen years later, in fact—that same guilty conscience, wracking his very soul, drove him on to his death.

Shakespeare's Macbeth is a character with whom we are forced to sympathize measurably, because we know that he is not naturally a criminal. Yet, after all, Macbeth is a man who—as Professor Pierce has pointed out—"has been restrained in the straight path of an upright life [only] by his respect for conventions." Mathias, on the other hand, is not held in check by conventions; he is *essentially* an honest man. He commits a crime, but what stronger motive could a man have than the one that drove him on to its commission? And yet—and this is the mistake that we wish to point out to the young writer—seven years ago a certain company released "The Bells" as a two-part subject, in which, according to the synopsis published in the trade journals, Mathias's only motive for committing the most detestable of all crimes was that he was behind in his rent! Even the magazine that gave in fiction form the story of the picture failed to mention what is brought out so strongly in the play—the innkeeper's distress at the thought that his wife's life depended upon his being able to raise the money to send her to the south of France without delay. The author *mentioned* that Mathias had a sick wife, but that was all. The whole treatment of the story in fiction form, moreover, was farcical, such names as "Mr. Parker" being intermingled with those of the

well-known characters, "Mathias," "Christian," and "Annette," while the wealthy, dignified Polish Jew was turned into a typical East-side clothing merchant. The real fault lay with the producer who, ignoring the great and pressing necessity that prompted Mathias's crime, garbled the original plot to the extent of allowing the innkeeper to murder the Jew because (according to the fiction-version in the magazine) he needed one hundred and seventy-five dollars to pay the rent! First, last, and all the time you must remember that your story *is not* a good story if the leading character is not, at all times, deserving of the spectator's sympathy, even when his action is not worthy of approval.

It is a matter for real regret to have to be compelled to state that, in spite of the many artistic advances made in motion-picture production during the past six or seven years, this most important point was deliberately overlooked when the Pathé Company made its very fine feature-production of "The Bells" in the Fall of 1918. We say "deliberately overlooked" because the writer who prepared the scenario for this modern five-reel version had the same opportunity as had the scenarioist who made the other adaptation, years ago, to read the original stage-play and to introduce this most compelling motive for Mathias's crime. If anything, the fault is more glaring in the Pathé production than in the older picture, for the wife is shown as a woman in apparently perfect health, although naturally worried by the fact that her husband's inability to raise the required amount of money may result in their losing both their home and their means of livelihood.

All the fine acting of Mr. Frank Keenan as Mathias, and all the wonderful scenic and lighting effects, were not sufficient to make us lose sight of the fact that the ones responsible for the picture's production had not given proper thought to the necessity for showing that the innkeeper had an unusually compelling motive for taking the life of and then robbing his guest. And, make no mistake, no matter how fine the production may be in other respects, this sort of thing is not overlooked by the intelligent, right-minded spectator of the photoplay.

9. The Theme and the Market

With regard to what are known as "costume plays" —and what we say is intended to apply to original stories, since it is never wise to attempt an adaptation of a popular book or play, even though you are armed with the right to do so, unless you have previously taken the matter up with some producing company— there is, perhaps, as was pointed out in Chapter XV, twice as much chance to sell such stories as there was a few years ago, since today every company is doing things in a much bigger way than in former years. But this must not be construed as meaning that the different companies are simply looking about for new ways to spend money. On the contrary, economy— sensible economy—is becoming more and more the keynote of film production. In every department, unnecessary expense is done away with. This applies to both the purchasing and the producing of photoplays. Better prices are being paid, yes; but stories calling

for what appears to be unnecessarily expensive settings or costuming are usually rejected. That is why you may rest assured that no costume plays will sell unless they have a strong and unusual story back of them. Again, by "costume" plays we mean stories ranging all the way from Bible times down to American Civil War times. What is regarded by the editor as a costume play, also, may not be wholly that; it may be a story in which only a few of the scenes are laid in a past age, as when, in the Paramount production of "The Devil Stone," the heroine, in a series of "visions," sees herself as the wicked Norse queen of centuries before, and learns how the fatal emerald first came into her possession.

There is absolutely no way of knowing what company will be most likely to buy a so-called costume play. If you honestly believe that you have the material for an unusual story calling for settings or costumes of other days—or even of our own day but of foreign lands—go ahead and write a comprehensive synopsis of it. If you send it to a company which asks for synopses only, you will be playing safe whether it interests them or not. If, on the other hand, you plan to submit it to a concern which likes to pass on a full script, with both synopsis and scenario, you can send in the synopsis alone and explain that if they are at all interested in *that,* you will submit the continuity of action.

As might be expected, stories of this kind are usually written in the studio, because the staff-writer has the opportunity of finding out just when and where the

picture can be made, what types of male and female players will be able to take part in it, and what special effects he may include. Still, to repeat, many of the bars against costume plays and stories calling for foreign and other hard-to-get settings have been taken down in the last year or two; but the demand for only strong, interesting stories is more insistent than ever, and you must still observe the rule—which, it may be added, will never change—of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the different markets if you wish to sell your stuff regularly and to the best advantage.

Themes! They are everywhere. The pathetic, the tragic, the humorous—countless admirable photoplays are to be drawn from these sources. And the most encouraging thought is this: Given the same basic idea for a plot, no two people will work it out in exactly the same way. Individuality will make a difference. "Happiness," as Mr. Floyd Hamilton Hazard has said, "does not always mean the same thing to everybody. It means many different things to different people. It is a theme upon which many varied tunes can be played."

In conclusion, we quote and warmly endorse this advice from Mr. Herbert Hoagland, censor of photoplays for Pathé Frères:

"Select for your theme an idea which embodies *good* things. Avoid anything coarse or suggestive. Make your stories clean, wholesome, happy—a dainty love story, a romantic adventure, a deed gloriously accomplished, a lesson well learned, an act of charity repaid

—anything of a dramatic nature which is as honest as daylight. Good deeds are just as dramatic as wicked deeds, and clean comedy is far and away more humorous than coarseness. Keep away from scenes of brutality, degeneracy, idiocy or anything which may bring a poignant pang of sorrow to some one of the millions of people who will see your story in the pictures, unless the pang will be one of remorse for a bad deed done or a good deed left undone. In a word, help the film-makers produce films which will help those who see them, and make the whole world a little better for your work."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TREATMENT OF COMEDY

Let it be remembered that the lines of division between the several sorts of comedy are not sharply defined, for one often overlaps the other; nor is a rigid adherence to type insisted upon by either playwright or public—for example, on the regular stage we have farce-comedy, and other hybrids.

1. Types of Humorous Plays Distinguished

Comedy, strictly, is a lighter, more refined, type of humor than farce. It deals with those amusing situations which do, or may, happen every day, without the introduction of the extravagant and the unnatural. True comedy is distinctly probable. Its humor is the humor of reality, however laughable it may be. It may press humor to an extreme, but that extreme must never strain our credulity.

Farce is essentially extreme. It deals with the absurd, the ridiculous, not with the physically impossible. Though not in itself probable, all its actions proceed just as though the basis on which it is worked out were probable.

To illustrate both types, we may recall an extremely humorous comedy situation which was worked out by

Miss May Irwin some years ago in "The Swell Miss Fitzwell." One of the characters had conspired with a physician to deceive the former's wife by pretending to break his leg. As a matter of fact he tumbles down stairs with an awful clatter and the leg is actually broken. The doctor comes in, according to the scheme, and, not knowing that the leg is broken, begins to twist it with fine professional vigor. The victim howls and protests that he is in agony, but the doctor merely whispers in a cheerful aside, "Keep it up, you are playing your part beautifully!" And so the play goes on.

All this might easily have happened in real life, and the audience is tickled—not to see a man apparently suffer, but at the humor of the biter being bit. The very incongruity is the foundation of the humor—incongruity, mingled with surprise.

But farce would not be content with twisting the leg, it would go to any absurd extreme imaginable. Suppose, for example, that the doctor's twisting of the victim's leg should so enrage him that he would leap upon the doctor and bite the torturer's leg in the manner of a dog. The wife, coming in, might think that her husband had hydrophobia, and a whole train of farcical results might follow. We have all seen unnatural yet uproariously funny situations to which such a complication might lead in farce.

Burlesque takes a well-known and often a serious subject and hits off its salient points in an uproarious manner. One might burlesque "Hamlet" by causing

a red-nosed Prince of Denmark to do a juggling act with "poor Yorick's" skull.

Extravaganza deals with the unnatural and the impossible. The super-human antics of the acrobatic buffoons in Hanlon's perennial "Superba," and those of the Byrne Brothers in "Eight Bells," are familiar examples.

2. Comedy a Difficult Art

A writer in one of the photoplay journals, advising writers who are struggling to succeed, concludes by admonishing them either to avoid stories which because of prohibited themes are likely to make them unpopular with editors, or else to "try comedies."

It may be that this writer is one of those who have never tried to write comedy scripts, or possibly he is one of the favored few who have a special talent for humor. Whichever may be the case, notwithstanding this well-meant advice, the truth is that the thoroughly effective comedy script is the hardest of all to produce, and this is proved by the fact that, no matter how many manufacturers announce that they "will not be able to use any more Western, slum life, or war stories for some time to come," they *never* declare that they are "over-stocked with good comedy scripts." There is *always* a market for a fine, clean comedy.

3. Comedy Requires a "Full" Treatment

But superior comedy scripts, we insist, are hard to write. One of the less obvious reasons is that there

are generally about twice as many scenes in a comedy script as in any kind of dramatic story. This does not mean, of course, that the comedy script is hard to write merely because it takes longer to write it. The labor expended on its mechanical preparation is trivial compared to the brain-work necessary to the building of a story which, while having almost double the usual number of scenes, must still display lively action, logical sequence, and convincing (which in the case of comedy means probable) situations from beginning to end.

Especially in comedy must each scene tell; hence there can be no excuse for "writing in" a number of scenes which have no dramatic value whatever, for that is palpable padding. True, you may have seen many comedy subjects in which one or two fairly good ideas were stretched out until you could almost picture the director kneeling in front of the camera, stop-watch in hand and megaphone at lips, wearily pleading: "Ginger up! Work fast! It will soon be over." Unfortunately, there have been many such "funny" plays, and there will be more, for the right kind of comedy is not to be had for the asking. The number of scenes in a comedy photoplay arises from the necessity that the action be brisk, scene follow scene rapidly, and the whole be played from a full third to a half faster than is the case in a dramatic subject.

To say that comedy requires a fuller script-treatment than is needed for a dramatic subject does not mean that in writing comedy scripts you should write in line after line of action that would only be useful

to give the director a few details which he could very well think of himself. No matter what part of the script you are writing, be constantly on the alert to avoid including non-essential details. Take pains, of course, to show the director just what bit of by-play it is that is responsible for a certain situation that will "get a laugh," but do not be verbose, and do not go into tiresome details. "It is a very easy matter, for a writer fired with enthusiasm, to overwrite."

4. Length of Comedy Photoplays

Seemingly, the day of the split-reel comedy is past. A few years ago, when one thousand feet was considered the proper length for the average dramatic subject, a full-reel comedy was the exception. They ran from four hundred to six hundred feet, the remainder of the reel being taken up with a scenic or other educational subject. Thus we had what came to be known as "split reels," as we have previously explained. Today, even the slap-stick comedies are produced in not less than one full reel, and they usually run to two reels. On the other hand, there are one or two comedy-producing companies which adhere to the single-reel length for their light comedies of domestic life.

Far more than in writing dramatic scripts, you must be guided in deciding the length of your comedy photoplay by the company to which you are submitting. This entails taking a chance as to whether you sell at all or not, in the event of your story's not being *suitable for* the market at which you have aimed it.

For example, those writers who have both sold to and had scripts rejected by the editor who looks after the wants of such a comedy team as Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Drew know that if a script does come back from them it is seldom "placable" anywhere else. For markets such as this, the fact that a synopsis only is usually called for is a real benefit to the writer, saving him much time and disappointment in the event of non-acceptance.

Another thing that experienced writers know is that certain of the larger producers of slap-stick comedy are not in the market for outside material. After being deluged with all kinds of "comedy" stories for years, the Keystone Company finally found it necessary to announce that nothing could be considered from free-lance writers, on account of the peculiar nature of the comedies produced by them and the necessity of having them written by inside writers who were familiar with the studio, its players, and the surrounding possible locations.

Thus, in its way, the market for comedy scripts or synopses is more or less limited, and yet there is, as has been said, a good demand for first-class humorous stories for the screen. One important rule to keep in mind is that they should be, in every case, just as long as, *but no longer than,* the idea that is back of them. You must never pad a comedy plot, or even a comedy idea; to do so is fatal to the attainment of artistically perfect results, if not to its acceptance by the editor.

In writing dramatic stories, on the other hand, more freedom is allowed. To be sure, here padding is bad

also, but in a dramatic subject the central idea is almost always big enough to justify one of the several lengths to which screen dramas now run; but, largely because comedy action is played so much faster than dramatic action, you must firmly refuse to allow yourself to expand a humorous story by even so little as a single scene beyond its logical and natural end.

Comedy ideas, perhaps more than any others, should be carefully classified, and in classifying you should try to determine, from the very first, the length to which that particular story ought to run. Having once arrived at your decision, keep to it. It is quality—clever situations and funny action—and not quantity that counts in the writing of humorous photoplays. Most of the good comedy themes have been worked over so often, either by the authors themselves or by the director, that it requires considerable skill to give them that much-desired new twist[1] that is necessary to make them acceptable. In the writing of dramatic photoplays, a word or two will often suggest the necessary "business" of a certain character, but in comedy it is especially important that every action, every bit of by-play, should be made to count; and for that reason it is necessary to give each scene a much fuller treatment in the script than would be necessary in describing dramatic action.

5. Classes of Photoplay Comedy and Their Requirements

While the written-and-spoken drama recognizes not

[1] Treated in Chapter XIX.

only the four major types of humorous plays already referred to, but several sub-types in addition, there are only three general classes under which humorous photoplays are usually grouped: (a) Comedy-Drama, (b) Light-Comedy and (c) Farce.

Of the comedies, two kinds are in almost constant demand—the comedy of society life, and the comedy of everyday life, with special emphasis upon domestic scenes. In treatment, these two kinds may be cast in any of the three foregoing forms, but usually they will adhere to the principle of comedy, even when they may verge on farce, or take on certain aspects of the more intense dramatic tone.

When writing photoplay comedies, remember always that comedy of *action* is more important than comedy of *idea*. That is, it is not enough that you work up to a funny climax, but the action leading up to the climax must be funny as well. A humorous idea underlying your comedy is good, but unless this idea is constantly worked out through humorous action, the effect is largely lost by its being too subdued. In fact, the photo-comedy *cannot* be purely the comedy of idea. On the regular stage, most light-comedies succeed by reason of the bright and humorous dialogue which the author puts into the mouths of the players. Funny "business," and the by-play of the players, help, of course, but the humorous lines of the piece are depended upon to make it a success.

It is just the opposite in photoplay; dialogue (unless cut-in leaders, taking the form of a speech made

by one of the characters, may be called "dialogue") is entirely absent, and humorous action and funny situations must take its place.

The requirements of a comedy script are very definitely covered by Mr. Sargent in the following, taken from his department in *The Moving Picture World:*

"In photoplay . . . the majority of the scenes must each have its own comedy action while the narrative is advanced, and it is here that the average writer of comedy falls short. If a scene is not naturally funny, put some humor into it. Do not force the comedy action, but invent something that is germane to the plot and natural to the situation. If you can do this you can write comedy, but until you can get a laugh in every scene you are not writing comedy, no matter how funny the central idea may be. As a rule the central idea furnishes the comedy for only one scene; not for the entire play. In comedy you must play faster, work harder, and strive constantly for the natural, unforced laughs. And remember that the editors go to vaudeville shows, the same as you do. They know the old sketches and the whiskered jokes. If they wanted them they would write them themselves."

The success of a comedy composition lies fundamentally in the novelty of its plot, or in some new and interesting phase of an old situation; it prospers in proportion to its interest-holding qualities, its natural logic, its probability, and the constant humor of the individual scenes and situations. There is a wide

difference between comedy and comic pictures, and the difference lies chiefly in that comedy depends largely for its humor on the cleverness displayed in the construction of the plot, whereas the comic picture is usually merely a series of funny situations arising from one basic situation, but having little or no plot. In the "comic," the scenes are loosely connected, while the humor of the picture depends upon the uproarious fun in each scene. These comic pictures, usually of the slap-stick variety, would naturally be classed as farces; but even in photoplay it is possible to produce a better and more natural brand of farce than that which depends for its humor upon the silly antics of different characters in a series of loosely connected scenes, which have no logical or consistent plot.

There is steady demand for the unusual and genuinely humorous light comedy—by which is meant the kind of photo-comedies that approximate the legitimate plays usually employed as vehicles by Mr. John Drew and Mr. Cyril Maude. They may treat of society, of business life, or of life in the home, but on account of the light, airy, and subtly humorous way in which the situations are developed they take far higher artistic rank than may be accorded to farce. There is also a good demand for comedy-dramas in which there is a strict regard for dramatic values in handling the different scenes, and in following out the plot, which has its serious elements, but in which the comedy-element remains comedy from first to last.

The domestic comedies produced by Metro, featuring Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Drew, of which we have

already spoken, are so well known, and these artists are so universally popular, that a word or two from Mr. Drew on the subject of screen comedy should be interesting and instructive:

"Comedy is and always will be an amusing story humorously told," says Mr. Drew. "If it *is* a good story, well told, then it is a comedy, but if it has no story or cannot be told humorously, then no amount of bolstering will ever make it into a comedy. You may add a lot of knockabout and perhaps get an acceptable farce, or you can write in sensation and get travesty, but you cannot by these means change the unfit into comedy, and the broad use of 'comedy' to apply to anything intended to be diverting is a misuse of an ancient and honorable word. . . . To my way of thinking comedy is first of all a good story. It is a story and not merely an incident or a collection of incidents. There must be a plot to obtain and hold the interest. This plot does not necessarily require profound depths, but there must be a distinct and clearly defined objective upon which the interest may be centred, and the interest must arise from mental processes and not from mere mechanical appeal. . . . Humorous action does not mean gross horseplay. The action itself may not always be marked to be amusing. To take a crude illustration, suppose that a character in the story is about to thrash his ancient enemy. He feels so certain of victory that he bribes the policeman on the beat not to interfere. Now he goes to the field of battle and unexpectedly gets the worst of it. He is the first to call for the police, and the scene flashes

between the suborned officer placidly smiling at the sounds of the affray and never dreaming that it is his patron who is calling for aid. There is nothing humorous in the spectacle of a policeman on a street corner. In a comedy of incident he would have to suffer indignity to get a laugh. In the comedy with a plot, the plot makes the action humorous. We are not, in reality, laughing at the policeman. He is merely the symbol of the idea. We are laughing at the predicament into which our hero has thrust himself. It is this thought, and not the sight of the policeman, at which we laugh. The policeman merely stands for the thought, yet it is humorous action within my meaning of the term in that the policeman represents the thought.

"In our own comedies Mrs. Drew and I seek to appeal to the mind as well as to the eye, but to appeal to the mind *through* the eye. We value the advantage of brightly-written sub-titles, but believe that these should supplement and not replace the comedy in the action. The clever leader may either prepare for the comedy-situation or may follow and intensify it, but it is always an accessory and not the chief aim. It is absurd to talk of the leader as an intrusion to be avoided. It should be avoided only when it really is an intrusion. The cleverness of an author displays itself in the expertness with which he handles leaders rather than in his skill in avoiding them." [1]

[1] Sidney Drew, "Comedy Picture Production," in *The Moving Picture World.*

6. General Advice

It is most important that, having started to write a farce, for instance, you *keep it a farce* throughout. One fault of many amateur scripts is that they show a tendency to be a little of everything. A strong emotional drama may—even should—have its "comedy relief," but it is a very unwise thing to introduce a note of tragedy into a farce or even into a straight comedy composition.

At this point it will not be out of place to say a few words in connection with this matter of "comedy relief," of which we have just spoken, as used in writing *dramatic* stories. The over-use of comedy relief, so called, is mostly due to misguided directors who have seen the success attending its introduction by prominent directors who really understood how and when to use it. A departmental writer in the *Motion Picture News,* speaking of the small army of directors "who worked with Griffith," says:

"Probably the most obvious of all the blunders made by the men who seek to emulate the wonderful work of Griffith is their introduction of comedy, chiefly through the medium of domestic animals, when they are forced to stop the action of their story to do so. Griffith's comedy is always spontaneous, incidental—it seems to have been inspired at the moment and runs in as part of the main action. The comedy of the men 'who worked with Griffith,' while perhaps inspired at the moment, rises not from the situations of the story but from the contemplative mind of the

director himself. This is the general rule, at any rate. There are exceptions, of course, and notable ones, too, but that all-powerful *motif* of 'comedy relief' often gets the better of the director's judgment and results in a product that is so unbalanced that much of the illusion is destroyed. In fact, comedy relief is a difficult element to gain. It should always be purely incidental, unforced, arising from some major situation, and so creating the desired contrast. When it is obviously sought after and introduced without regard for its suitability it is not comedy relief but comedy-out-of-place."

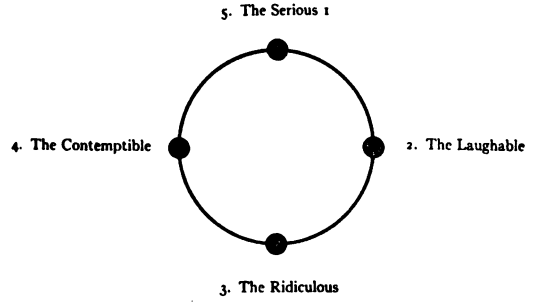
Since this, like the over-use of the close-up, is something for which directors are largely responsible, it is the photoplaywright's duty to help by being very careful about how he himself writes in comedy intended to "light up" tense, serious, dramatic action.

No matter what class of humorous photoplay you may be writing, you must keep in mind what we enlarged upon in Chapter XVI: Nothing is funny that offends against good taste, or that, in any way, causes pain to any number of the spectators. Comedy, to be worthy of appreciation, must always be good-natured. National types as caricatured by many comedians with the aid of eccentric costumes and weird make-ups are usually as far from being real national types as one could well imagine. Humor must have more than mere extravagance or caricature for its basis. Even in farce and in musical comedy, as well as in vaudeville, the once familiar green-whiskered Irishman, the Frenchman who is all shrugging shoulders and

absurd gestures, the negro who walks as if he were trying to take two steps backward for every one forward, and whose most noticeable facial feature is an enormous mouth, and the "Busy Izzy" type of Jew, who when not getting robbed himself, or being otherwise abused, is doing his best to defraud others, are gradually going out of fashion. And in the photoplay, which is now seen by all classes of people and is for all the people, racial characteristics must be treated in at least a fairly accurate manner, *and always good-naturedly*. Six or seven years ago, more than half the comedies produced were based upon a chase, or else depended largely upon slap-stick humor to raise a laugh. Not a few of them had as their chief comedy-incident an act of downright cruelty to some animal, or even to some human being. Today, when manufacturers are vying with each other to produce better, cleaner, and more universally enjoyable pictures, the script that violates Censorship rules or studio ethics by including any of the foregoing undesirable subjects stands but little show of reaching the production stage, if, indeed—which is extremely unlikely—it is accepted at all.

"Good sense is at once the basis of and the limit to all humor. He who lacks a fine perception of 'the difference between what things are and what they ought to be,' as the always-to-be-quoted Hazlitt expressed it, can never write humor. All the way through we shall find that mirth is a matter of relationships, of shift, of rigidity trying to be flexible, of something shocked into something else.

"Let us think of a circle on which four points have been marked:



"Beginning with a serious idea, we may swiftly step from point to point until we return to the serious, with only slight variations from the original conception. Take the perennial comedy-theme of the impish collar, and visualize the scenes:

"1. A man starts to button his collar. Nothing is less comical, as long as the operation proceeds normally.

"2. But the button is too large and his efforts begin to exasperate him, with the result that his expression and movements become incongruous. We see, and laugh—though he does not.

"3. He begins to hop around in a mad attempt to button the unbuttonable, and soon rips off the collar, addressing it in unparliamentary language. He is ludicrous, ridiculous, absurd.

"4. In his rage he violently kicks a pet dog that comes wagging up to him. Our laughter subsides, for

the fellow is more contemptible than amusing—a deeper feeling has been born in us.

"5. The little dog limps off with a broken leg—we are no longer amused, we are indignant. What is more, not only have we gotten back to the serious, but there is no amusement left in any of the previous scenes.

"Still applying the test of the *extent* of the variation from the normal as shown in the effects, we conclude that *serious consequences kill humor.* The mere idea of such consequences, when we know that in the circumstances they are really impossible, may convulse us with merriment, as when we see a comedian jab a long finger into the mouth of his teammate and the latter chews it savagely. In real life this might sicken us with disgust—I say 'might,' because we can easily conceive of such a situation's exciting laughter if the victim were well deserving of the punishment. It is human for us to laugh when the biter is bit; indeed, variations on this theme are endless in humorous writing.

"*Sympathy also kills humor.* The moment we begin to pity the victim of a joke—for humor has much to do with victims—our laughter dies away. Therefore the subject of the joke must not be one for whose distress we feel strong sympathy. The thing that happens to a fop is quite different in effect from that which affects a sweet old lady. True, we often laugh at those—or at those ideas—with whom or with which we are in *sympathy,* but in such an instance the ludicrous for the

moment overwhelms our sympathy—and sometimes even destroys it." [1]

This one thing bear especially in mind: *clean* comedy is even more essential than clean drama. It is so easy, when writing humorous material, to go wrong without intending it—indeed, even without knowing it. Under the guise of comedy some producers are responsible for scenes and situations that manage somehow or other to pass the censors, whereas the same scene in a dramatic photoplay would not be tolerated for a moment. But these are exceptions.

The marital relation should be touched upon only in a way which admits of no offense being taken by right-minded and refined people. Real infidelity had far better be left out of humorous photoplays altogether. Here more than in any other branch of photoplay writing you should remember that what merely *might* be tolerated on the regular stage would never do on the screen. It is well to remember also that just as the American public has tired of the chase and the foolish powder, it has also sickened of the coarse, suggestive, and even the questionable subjects that could once be depended upon to "get a laugh." There is absolutely no excuse for introducing anything into a picture today that would offend the good taste of any member of an audience. The local censorship boards of some cities have made themselves ridiculous in the eyes of thinking photoplay patrons, but the work done by the National Board of Censors has been the means

[1] J. Berg Esenwein, *Writing for the Magazines*; published uniform with this volume in "The Writer's Library."

of slowly and surely causing the lower class of photoplay patrons to acquire an appreciation of good dramatic subjects as well as more refined comedy.

It may be said in passing that not all the companies producing farcical photoplays or slap-stick, as it is generally called—exclude the work of the outside writer. Such firms as do accept outside scripts of this kind are prepared to "go the limit" in the matter of expense in order to make their pictures superlatively funny and unusual in the matter of staging. The Pathé comedy, "Cleopatsy," featuring the famous clown Toto, was a striking example of how a slap-stick comedy today is unhesitatingly given as elaborate and sumptuous a scenic investiture as was accorded a few years ago to screen-versions of Shakespearean or other "classic" plays. The laughs in this Pathé production were produced, principally, by the introduction of business and situations that simply could not have happened in the time of Cleopatra, Antony and Cæsar. Thus we saw traffic policemen with their Stop and Go signals in the middle of the Sahara; telephones, check books, motorcycles and automobiles in use, and so on. In addition, the leaders were filled with modern business and other slang; and the spectacle of a huge negro wrapping Cleopatsy in a modern Axminster rug and carrying her in to show her to Antony (instead of, as according to history, Cæsar) kept the spectators in a roar of laughter. For an originally-worked-out idea such as this there is nearly always a ready market.

Finally, remember that comedy-action should run as smoothly as a well-oiled machine. Start with a good,

fresh, funny idea and then make each scene run smoothly and logically into the next. There are certain series of comic pictures in the comic section of the newspapers which might well serve as your models for progressive and logical action. Mr. Bud Fisher's well-known "Mutt and Jeff" and Mr. George McManus's "Bringing Up Father" series are excellent examples. Particularly in the McManus pictures do we get funny, logical, and, above all, generally natural —in the sense of its being probable—comedy action. Take as an example the one which is sub-titled "It's a pity the valet left—he would have been such a nice playmate for Father." "Father," as we know, is the very much hen-pecked husband of a socially impossible woman who holds her place among the "400" only by reason of her husband's wealth. It is Father's constant ambition and determination to spend as much of his time as possible amongst his old "roughneck" working-man pals, instead of in attending his wife's receptions and other society functions. A sociable companion of his own class is what he constantly seeks. In this picture there are, as is usual in the Sunday supplements, twelve scenes. The action of the picture may be roughly synopsized as follows:

Scene 1. Mrs. Jiggs introduces Mr. Jiggs—"Father"—to the new, and very English, valet—who "waited on Count de Miles until he died." To which Father (possible sub-title) replies: "No wonder he died!"

Scene 2. The butler, in Father's room, announces

that he "thinks he'll like the job and that Father won't find him hard to please."

Scene 3. Shows Father making a critical inspection of the statue-like valet, and muttering that "his folks must have been fond of children, to raise him!"

Scene 4. Shows Father glancing up at a shield and some ancient battle-clubs, spears and axes, hung on the wall. We can easily guess what is passing in his mind.

Scene 5. Father takes the valet over to the window and stands him facing out, saying that he wishes to show him the wonderful view. Behind his back Father holds one of the war-clubs.

Scene 6. As the valet gazes out of the window, Father swings the club upward, preparing for a mighty blow, muttering as he does so: "It's a duty I owe my country."

Scene 7. Just as Father is about to strike, the valet glances down at something on the corner of the dresser, and exclaims: "Ah! A pinochle deck! My favorite game!" To which Father replies: *"Oh!* Do you play cards?"

Scene 8. Here they are in the middle of an exciting game, Father winning everything, the chips piled high before him. The valet asks: "Will you pardon me? I'll see if I can get some of my wages in advance."

Scene 9. In the lower hallway. Shows the valet asking Mrs. Jiggs for his salary in advance, adding that "the count always paid him ahead."

Scene 10. Back in the room upstairs, with Father at the table, on which are piled the valet's clothes, while the constantly losing valet plays his last hand from behind a screen.

Scene 11. Shows the entrance of the butler, who tells Father that Mrs. Jiggs "wishes to see him at once."

Scene 12. Shows the inglorious dismissal of the pinochle-loving valet, dressed only in three of Mrs. Jiggs' hat boxes, the bottoms of which have been knocked out. When Mrs. Jiggs declares "Pack your things and get out immediately—you are fired!" the valet answers gloomily: "I have nothing to pack, Madam!"

This, although merely an idea drawn out into a dozen pictures, is the sort that might easily be made the foundation for a laughable short comedy. Barring the fact that one or two of the scenes are played (so to speak) in the same setting, with no leader or other scene separating them—as would be the case in photoplay—this newspaper "funny" is much better put together, much more logical, and is just about the same number of scenes as were many of the split-reel comedies of a few years ago. Almost all of the more popular comic series in the newspapers, in fact, may be studied with profit by the would-be writer of screen comedies. There is action, and often very funny action, in every picture, and the plot moves quickly, logically, and without the slightest sign of unnecessary

detail or irrelevant action, to an extremely funny climax, which, best of all, is usually a surprise to the reader.

Apply the same working-principle to the writing of humorous photoplays, especially the plan of having a surprise climax followed by a quick denouement, and you can hardly fail to produce a comedy that will cause the editor to notify you favorably.

CHAPTER XIX

GETTING THE NEW TWIST

No story is an old story if you give it a new "twist" —a fresh turn, an original surprise, an unexpected course of narration. As a matter of fact, this is what fiction writers and dramatists have been doing for hundreds of years; taking an old idea, they have twisted it about, enlarged upon it, provided a new setting for the story, and created something new, yet in truth far from new, from the idea furnished by another writer. Who evolved the "original" plot in any certain case is a question that will forever remain a question, for the earliest plays and stories are no longer extant. But this we do know: there are only a very few original or primary plots, and all the plays, novels, and short-stories that have been written are variations of these. Some writers have made the twist more pronounced, and their work, judged by present-day standards, is classed as original. Others, without trying to conceal the source of their plots, nevertheless give them new treatment, and so are not charged with plagiarism. Therefore we may conclude that that writer is entitled to be called original who is capable of so twisting and remodeling the theme used by another writer that it is, in the remodeling, virtually recreated.

1. An Example from Fiction

As a concrete example, let us compare Poe's short-story, "The Cask of Amontillado," with Conan Doyle's "The New Catacomb." In both of these the theme is revenge, brought about by having the one seeking to entomb his enemy alive—the same theme, precisely, as Balzac had used earlier in "La Grande Bretêche," and Edith Wharton in later years in "The Duchess at Prayer." In "The Cask of Amontillado," Montresor desires to be revenged upon Fortunato because the latter has both injured and insulted him. Exactly how he has been insulted we are not told; nor do we know the extent of his "injuries." It is sufficient for the purpose of the story that we know that his Latin blood has been roused sufficiently to make him eager to compass the death of his enemy—who is none the less his enemy although, up till the very moment when Fortunato realizes the awful fate that is to be his, he (Montresor) pretends friendship for his victim. After Montresor's revenge has been accomplished by walling up Fortunato in a subterranean vault, the perpetrator feels no remorse. He has completed what he set out to do, and is satisfied. He has "punished with impunity" and he has made the fact that he is the redresser felt by "him who has done the wrong."

What chiefly impresses the reader is the lack of motive for Montresor's crime—for crime it surely is, whatever his real or fancied wrongs—other than the motive of a madman. At the conclusion our sympathy

for the unfortunate victim of Montresor's hate is perhaps as great as is our pity for Montresor himself.

But note that Doyle's story is not only an original piece of fiction—as we have just interpreted that expression—but also one in which we recognize that the seeker after revenge is thoroughly deserving of our sympathy, even though we do not entirely approve of his bringing about the death of even so unworthy a creature as we know his enemy to be. In Doyle's story, as in Poe's, the background is Italy, but Italy of the present day, so we feel that we understand the motives of the characters better because they are of our own time. There is a definite and grievous wrong committed against the young woman with whom the central character is in love, therefore the wrong is committed indirectly against the lover himself. We are made to realize the despicable nature, the utter heartlessness, of the young woman's betrayer, and we actually *hate* him as soon as the facts are made clear to us. We realize how great has been the love for her cherished by the man who finally punishes the one who has wronged her, by causing him to be entombed alive in a Roman catacomb which he himself has but recently discovered.

In Poe's story, Fortunato is chained to the wall of the vault, after which he is literally walled up and buried alive. In "The New Catacomb," the redresser of the wrong takes the evil-doer down into the catacomb and leaves him while he finds his own way out by means of a trail of cord, knowing that the other, unable to follow him, is being left in what will be his tomb.

The dramatic intensity of Doyle's story is just as great as in that written by Poe; the "hero" is as much deserving of our sympathy as the "villain" merits our condemnation; and the treatment of the theme, from first to last, makes Doyle's an absolutely original story, although there is little doubt that it was suggested, or, at least influenced, either by the one written many years before by the American master of the short-story, or by Balzac's remarkable tale referred to above.

The discriminating photoplaywright will have no difficulty in making the application of this illustration of how an original story may grow out of an old theme. *But be careful not to turn this liberty into an excuse for adhering closely to a borrowed theme.*

2. Plagiarism

In justice to writers in general it is only fair to believe that most cases of plagiarism are quite unintentional. The fault usually is in the writer's memory. Turn your eye inward, and form the habit of tracing the origin of your inspirations—sometimes it may chagrin you to find how near to unconscious imitation you have been. You may get the inspiration for a story and write it; it may be accepted and produced; then, after its release, some friend will casually remark that it reminds him of a Vitagraph picture that he saw a year or two ago. And only after he has called your attention to it do you realize that that Vitagraph story, seen and forgotten, *was* the source of your "inspiration"—and perhaps you have committed an unconscious theft.

In an earlier chapter we have urged photoplaywrights to keep in touch with the market so as to avoid writing on trite themes. But that practise will not help the conscious plagiarist. Why should he invent a new twist when he can steal one? This would seem to be his short-sighted logic. Fortunately, there are not many unscrupulous writers who deliberately attempt to sell to editors stories which are simply adaptations of more or less well-known stories or plays. A great deal has been said about editors and their assistants being familiar with standard literature and current books, plays, and magazine stories. But no editor is infallible, and once in a while a stolen story "gets by." We know of two companies, each of which within the space of six months produced stories that were plainly recognizable as adaptations of "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder," the second story in "The Return of Sherlock Holmes." Another company released a picture that was simply Maupassant's "TheNecklace" so carelessly re-dressed that we wonder the editor did not recognize it after reading the first paragraph of the synopsis.

The final test of whether a story really resembles another closely enough to suggest intentional plagiarism is when the similarity between the two is recognized immediately by people in many different parts of the country—yet that is too late to help any one involved! The short-stories of "O. Henry" have been so widely read that when a new story appears that closely resembles one of his it is not long before comparisons are made. Three or four years ago a certain company made a two-part picture that so closely resembled O.

Henry's "The Reformation of Calliope" that after its release one of the present writers received letters of inquiry from photoplaywrights in five different cities commenting upon it, three of the letters being from young writers who, recognizing the resemblance, asked if it were "permissible to take the principal plot-idea of a copyrighted story and, by changing it about slightly, make it into a salable photoplay." As might be supposed, they were earnestly advised to refrain from doing so.

A dozen years ago there appeared in the English edition of *The Strand Magazine* a story in which a retired Indian officer, at a dinner given to a party of his friends, displays a remarkably fine diamond. The jewel is unset, having been taken—as most jewels in stories of this kind are—from the head of an Indian idol. The stone is passed around for inspection. The Hindoo servant is clearing some of the things from the table, and the diamond has just been admired by an old gentleman in a rather frayed dress-suit, when the attention of everyone present is drawn away from the table for a moment or two. When they turn around, the diamond has disappeared. Naturally, the guests are embarrassed, but they all offer to allow themselves to be searched, with the exception of the shabby-genteel old gentleman. While he protests that he knows nothing of how the stone has disappeared, he stubbornly refuses to allow them to search his clothes. The effect upon the other guests may easily be imagined. Later, however, one of the guests having followed him home, it is discovered that the poor old man has merely filled

his pockets with different delicacies from the table, and has taken them home to his sick grandchild. Subsequently it is discovered that the Hindoo servant has taken the jewel, and he is arrested and punished. In the moment that the attention of the guests was directed elsewhere, after the old gentleman had laid it on the table, the servant had snatched up the jewel and dropped it into a half-filled water glass, where it remained undiscovered while the servant was searched with the others. It is pretty generally known that an unset pure diamond, if dropped into a glass of water, becomes invisible.

Some time during 1911, one of the producing companies released a picture entitled "The Class Reunion." To get the plot of the photoplay story, simply substitute an impecunious professor for the old gentleman in the short-story. Instead of the Hindoo servant, have one of the pupils—if our memory serves—turn out to be the thief, and have him drop the jewel—which is a ruby, and not a diamond—into a glass of red wine instead of into a glass of water. In all other particulars the two stories were identical.

Only a few months later, this plot cropped up again —in fiction form—in a prominent American magazine. Then, in the release of another well-known company, of January 13, 1913, it again did service in the photoplay "The Thirteenth Man," where the inevitable banquet is the annual reunion of "The Thirteen Club." The theme has now become so hackneyed that, as the list given in Chapter XVI shows, it is no longer serviceable for photoplay purposes.

Obviously, these facts are cited not to discredit the companies referred to, but solely to emphasize the difference between the genuinely new twist as exemplified in Conan Doyle's "The New Catacomb," and the dangerously close similarity as exhibited in at least one of the two photoplays just referred to as following the plot of the *Strand* story.

It must not be inferred, however, that all cases in which the themes of short-stories are developed into photoplays with very little change are plagiarisms, either conscious or unconscious. Many important companies are negotiating constantly with the magazines for the right to photodramatize their most suitable short-stories. Sometimes this is done with the consent of the author and the plot of the story used substantially without change, while in other instances the plot is freely changed, only the germ being used. It is particularly in such cases that we must be careful not to charge plagiarism.

In this connection it is important to note that the photoplaywright cannot be too careful in respecting the rights of publishers and authors in their fictional properties. To many writers it is not clear precisely what rights an author parts with when he, without any other stipulation, sells a short-story or a longer piece of fiction outright to a magazine, so he must be careful in offering moving-picture rights to a company unless he is *sure,* from a clear *understanding* with the magazine publisher, that he is at liberty to do so. If these points are not altogether in the clear to you, nevertheless it is certainly wise to be definite in se-

curing your own copyright on stories, when that is possible, by agreeing with your publisher for the release to you of all dramatic rights.

To return once more to the subject of originality, in W. W. Jacobs's story, "The Monkey's Paw," the thrillingly terrible crisis begins when the father, much against his will, makes use of the second wish granted to him as the possessor of the fatal paw and wishes his dead son alive again. In the night he and his wife are aroused by a familiar knocking on their door. The mother, believing it to be their son returned to life, rushes to let him in, but while she is trying to unlock the door, the husband, remembering the terrible condition of the son's body, he having been crushed to death by some machinery, utters the third and last wish. The knocking ceases, and when the woman succeeds in getting the door open, the street lamp flickering opposite is shining on a quiet and deserted road.

Substantially the same plot is used in a story published in *The Blue Book*, "The Little Stone God," the principal difference being that, when those in the house hear the knocking on the door, they refuse, in utter terror, to answer the summons. The knocking ceases; and the next morning they learn that a telegraph messenger boy called at the house with a message on the previous night and, after knocking several times in vain, went away again.

The foregoing are only a few examples of plots which strongly resemble one another. How it comes that they resemble one another it is not our province to discuss any further—the point is that if your story

is inspired by the work of another writer, give it such an absolutely original treatment that you can conscientiously refer to it as original.

"Don't waste time in rewriting other people's brain-children, for the scenario-editor goblins will catch you sure as fate, and once you get a reputation for plagiarism, not a film-maker will dare to buy any manuscript from you for fear it is copyrighted." [1]

In photoplays as in novels and short-stories nothing is so disappointing as a story whose title is inviting, and the first few pages—or scenes, as the case may be—interesting, but which soon begins to reveal itself as nothing more than a story with which we are already familar, though slightly changed in a few particulars in the hope that it may be welcomed as an original work. We say "slightly changed," for if the all-important new twist is not given the story cannot escape detection as being what it is—a mere copy of the original.

"The formula upon which the plot is built is of venerable antiquity," says Frederick Taber Cooper, in *The Bookman,* in reviewing a certain novel. Then, although he commends the purpose of the story, he concludes: "But the book is not really an important one, because there have been scores of books equally well written which have already said much the same thing. The author has not had any new twist to give to the old theme—and, worst of all, we know from wearisome past experience just how the plot will work

[1] Herbert Case Hoagland, *How to Write a Photoplay.*

out, just how inevitable it is that Kenneth will achieve fame, and his father will be reconciled, and Jean, convinced of her injustice, will tearfully plead for forgiveness." Don't lay yourself open to such a criticism.

3. What Is Originality?

"Popularly, we call that man original who stands on his own feet, uses the thoughts of others only to stimulate and supplement his own, and who does his best to color borrowed thought with the hue of his own personality. Such a man, if he be not a creator, is at least a thinker, and a thinker need never be a literary thief. The entrance of any thought that will set the mind to working should be welcome indeed." [1]

Speaking of the way in which a writer may take an old plot and work it over, Frank E. Woods, the former "Spectator" of the *Dramatic Mirror,* says:

"That is precisely what every author does in nine cases out of ten. He utilizes and adapts the ideas he has gained from various sources. It is when he follows another author's sequence or association of ideas or arrangement of incidents so closely as to make his work appear to be an obvious copy or colorable imitation, that he is guilty."

4. The New Twist Illustrated

As an example of the way in which an old theme may be given a new twist, let us compare the plot of

[1] J. Berg Esenwein, *Writing the Short-Story.*

Browning's "Pippa Passes"—which, by the way, was wonderfully well produced in motion-picture form by the Biograph Company in 1909—and James Oppenheim's photoplay, "Annie Crawls Upstairs," produced by the Edison Company.

In each, the theme is the spiritual redemption of several different characters through the influence of the heroine, who in each case accomplishes this worthy end quite unconsciously. Pippa, the mill-girl, spends her holiday wandering through the town and over the countryside, singing her innocent and happy-hearted songs. It is the effect of those songs upon those who hear them that gives the poem-story its dramatic moments and makes up the plot. In Mr. Oppenheim's story, the heroine, Annie, is a tiny, crippled child who, wandering out of the tenement kitchen where her half-drunken father is quarreling with his wife, crawls painfully up one flight of stairs after another, innocently walking into each flat in turn, and in each doing some good by her mere presence. On one floor a wayward girl is so affected by meeting with the crippled child that she remains at home with her mother instead of going out to join a party of friends of questionable character; on another floor she is instrumental in preventing an ex-convict from joining his former pals in another crime; in the flat above, she brings together two lovers who are about to part in anger; in the next flat she comforts a busy dressmaker who has lost patience with and scolded her little girl for being in her way while she is at work, and who realizes on seeing Annie that she should at least be thankful that her

child has health and strength, and does not, therefore, add the care and worry of sickness to the burden of poverty. Finally, on the top floor, a young man, heart-sick and weary of the vain search for work in a strange city, coming out of his room finds little Annie asleep, her head resting against the frame of the door. As he carries her down to her own flat, he picks up courage, banishes the thoughts of suicide which a few moments before had filled his brain, and resolves to try again. The picture ends with the mother and father, their quarrel forgotten, bending over the child.

Thus, consciously or unconsciously, Mr. Oppenheim has used the same theme that Browning used; but he has given it a new twist with the introduction of each new incident in the story. The little lame child of the tenements does not seem to speak a word in the picture, and the scene between the two young lovers parting after their quarrel is totally unlike the scene between Ottima and Sebald in Browning's poem, yet we feel that the good influence that changes the heart of the burglar, as he sits there planning the new crime, is the same as that which shakes the guilty wife and her lover when Pippa passes beneath the window of Luca's house, singing:

God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

We have read of a Western script in which the outlaw, wounded and bleeding, is given shelter by the heroine. When the sheriff arrives, he sees the basin containing the bloody water and inquires how it comes there. Even while he is looking at it, the girl cuts her

hand with a knife, and declares that, having cut herself before the Sheriff's arrival, she has just washed her hand in the basin.

This incident, or situation, is almost identical with one in the Ambrosio Company's "After Fifty Years," which won the first prize of twenty-five thousand francs ($5,000) at the Turin Exhibition, and which showed as one of its many thrilling situations the Italian heroine gashing her hand with a knife held behind her back, to explain to the Austrian soldier who is in search of her lover the presence of blood on her sleeve.

Yet this could not be called a theft, or even a rearrangement of another writer's plot. The plot, characters, and setting were entirely different in each play —it was only that one situation that was made use of; and it seems likely that it was from the Ambrosio picture, or the account of it, that the author of the Western story got his inspiration. Yet who can really tell? Thoughts are marvellous things, and both writers may have gotten their ideas from some other original—or even conceived them in their own brains.

After all, as has been pointed out, the trouble with many young writers is that they are not content with copying a single situation. They have not been "in the game" long enough to realize either the risk that they are taking or the wrong that they are doing a fellow writer, so they not only adapt to their own needs a strong situation in another's story but precede and follow it with other incidents and situations which

are substantially the same as those surrounding the big situation in the original story.

But giving an old theme a new twist is a trick of the trade that comes only with experience, and experience is gained by practice. Experience and practice soon teach the photoplaywright not to rely too heavily upon the newspaper for new ideas, for almost every day editors receive two or more plots which closely resemble each other, simply because the writers, having all chosen the same theme, have all worked that theme up in the same way—the *obvious* way, the *easiest* way, the way that involves the least care, and therefore the least ingenuity.

"Where do the good plots come from, anyhow?" asks John Robert Moore. "We people in universities often amuse ourselves by tracing stories back to their origins. The trouble is that we often reach the limit of our knowledge, but rarely find the beginning; for the *plot* seems to be as old as the race. What, then, has been changed in a story which has been raised from a mediæval legend to a modern work of art?

"In such cases, the setting and the moral content are almost invariably altered. An absurdly comic story about an Irishman and a monkey, which was current a couple of centuries ago, became 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' in the hands of Poe. The central plot remained much the same, but the whole of the setting and the intellectual content assumed a new and vastly higher significance. 'The Bottle Imp' harks back to the Middle Ages; but Stevenson made a world-

famous story of it by giving it the flavor of the South Sea Islands which he knew so well."

So there are both discouragement and cheer for those who accept the Wise Man's dictum that there is nothing new under the sun. In the one aspect, there seems little chance for the novice since the primary plots are really so few; but in the other view, fresh arrangements of old combinations are always possible for those who see life with open eyes, alert minds, warm hearts, and the resolve to be as original as they can.

CHAPTER XX

COMPLETE FIVE-REEL PHOTOPLAY

SCRIPT "EVERYBODY'S GIRL"

Adapted from "O. Henry's" Short-Story, "Brickdust Row," by A. Van Buren Powell, and Produced in Film Form by The Vitagraph Company[1]

The mere reading of the following photoplay script will not do you any good. To get any benefit from it you must *study* it.

The script, which is an adaptation—the short-story of a famous author, "O. Henry," translated into screen technique—is in the form in which it was accepted for production. An adaptation rather than the script of an original idea is chosen for two reasons: the story from which it was made is accessible in every library, and the translation into production-form offers certain problems which make it a more effective lesson in idea-building.

Pretend that you are a staff writer, and that you are to "do" a certain story by "O. Henry." Get from your library the book of short-stories by the famous author which contains "Brickdust Row"—the volume is en-

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titled "The Trimmed Lamp." Read the story—read it until you are thoroughly familiar with its every word. Read it analytically. You are to make an adaptation of it. What must that adaptation have for its fundamental purpose?—the preservation of "O. Henry's" charm of atmosphere; the utilization of his cleverness with words, wherever possible in leaders; the emphasizing of his purpose in writing the story. What was that purpose? Was it not to show how a man's code of ethics, mistakenly clung to, resulted in his misjudging a perfectly innocent girl, with resultant tragedy? And, contributory to this, was it not the aim of the original author to emphasize and excuse the conduct of the girl—conduct arising naturally from her environment and station in life?

These things must be conveyed, then, through the medium of characterization, with the help of little human touches. The girl must be shown as sweet, clean, without a wrong thought; the man must be clearly depicted, his reason for being so seemingly churlish and careless of the duties imposed upon him by his ownership of many tenements must be handled in such a way that he will not be an unsympathetic character.

Then we are confronted with certain studio conditions. The story must be made of feature length—five or more reels. Again, tragedy is not welcome on the screen. Arguments might be offered to show that the original story will lose strength through the addition of the "happy ending." We cannot help that—in fact, we must surmount that obstacle. We must *make* the

story equally strong and try, if we can, to add to its lesson. We cannot air our ideals, and write just as we wish; we must conform to the set rules of our particular studio, as well as to the general rules covering screencraft.

The change of title is governed by so many factors that it need only be said that the alternative title was given as possessing a greater advertising and drawing power.[1]

Now we have dissected "O. Henry's" original story. We have decided what we must do with it. Comes the director for consultation. He feels that the story is not long enough. It need not be padded, but an additional character might be introduced to bring out and emphasize the true character of our leading woman, and at the same time the required dramatic element and the contrasting of his character with that of the leading man may be achieved by his presence.

So, agreeing with the director, we write our script.

Throughout, notes will call your attention to certain points that will help your understanding of the technical purposes of certain material.

"EVERYBODY'S GIRL"

SYNOPSIS

Florence is a shop girl, of the quiet, sweet, clean type. She finds it hard to make ends meet. Her more

[1] In Mr. Van Buren Powell's new book, *The Photoplay Synopsis*, published uniform with this volume in "The Writer's Library," he explains why this title was changed.

practical, more worldly-wise friend, Ella, the shoe-store cashier, suggests that they share her present quarters in "Brickdust Row"—a decaying tenement block. By this division of expense they can both save "enough to buy an extra pickle for lunch once in a while."

When Florence sees "Brickdust Row" she is depressed by its dull aspect, its dreary environment. But she accepts Ella's proposal, and the two girls begin their sharing of the tiny room as cheerfully as possible.

Through a terrifying experience with a male flirt Florence comes to learn that Ella has long been used to accepting attentions and escort from men outside the home atmosphere. Ella explains that since the owner of "Brickdust Row" is so avaricious that he allows the parlors to be rented out, no place is provided where the girls may entertain men properly, and so the society of the opposite sex must be sought and enjoyed "here, there and everywhere."

The idea is repugnant to Florence, who is unusually fine in her ideas of propriety; but she comes to see that Ella's way is the only outlet for youth and the desire for companionship, brightness, life.

She is very choice in her selection of escorts, and never permits any young man she meets to discover even where she lives.

The owner of the tenements is a bored, money-spoiled young man—Alexander Blinker. His lawyer tries to make him take enough interest in his tenements to change the leases so that the girls can have a place

to meet gentlemen with the shield of propriety. Blinker is too anxious to get to a golf tournament even to listen.

Florence grows used to her role of "Everybody's Girl," and while she is decidedly decorous, she learns the arts and affectations of the "street meeting."

Blinker has to come to his lawyer in order to sign some important documents; they are not prepared. He must stay in the city over Sunday. The idea fills him with disgust; he longs for the hunting trip he has planned. In sheer desperation he decides to do that which his butler considers equivalent to jumping from the window, in view of his social status—Blinker determines to go to Coney Island.

His experiences may be imagined as he is pushed and jostled by the rough-and-ready pleasure-seekers. He gets on the boat and is seen by Florence, who regards him as a prospective escort and so conducts herself that he is virtually forced into conversation, and with no experience to guide him in this strange method of introduction, he manages to bear himself suitably, to the end that the two debark at the island of pleasure-seeking and set out to enjoy themselves, Florence being the guide, by virtue of her experience.

At first Blinker feels entirely out of his element, but Florence shows him the spirit in which to accept the tinsel and the rude fun-making. He soon comes to like it—and to think very well of the naively "different" girl beside him.

He is treated like all her other cavaliers at the time and place of parting—she goes home alone. He re-

turns to his apartment with a new idea of the city's possibilities.

That same evening Florence finds an intruder unceremoniously invading her room—a "gang" leader who believes the shot he has just fired at an adversary has been fatal in its effect. He tells her his story, but says he did not do the shooting. She believes him, and when the police come to her door in their search for the culprit, she pretends that the man opposite her at the table is her brother.

Later she learns that he has told her a falsehood, but she does not deliver him to justice, and when she finds that the man who was shot is not fatally injured, she sends the shielded one away in safety; for which display of her fine sense of loyalty he becomes a veritable watchdog, never intruding his presence upon her, but being always near to observe the quality of the companions she still allows herself.

Blinker meets her by appointment the next evening, and the faithful Watchdog follows them to Coney Island, vigilant, feeling sure than a man of the evident social status of Blinker can mean no good to a girl in Florence's station.

On the boat, coming home, Blinker tells Florence that he loves her. So accustomed is she to this display of sentimentality in her cavaliers that she merely laughs. He persists, and she indicates a belief that he is just like the rest. Mention of "the rest" awakes question in Blinker. He learns that she meets men indiscriminately. He has a horror of this evidence of

what he considers to be moral laxity, and when Florence sees this she is amazed. *He* has met her in the same way, yet he is shocked that she should meet others! In justifying her course she explains what sort of place "Brickdust Row" is, and how the girls are driven out.

A fire is discovered on the boat, and in the excitement Blinker and Florence are separated and the Watchdog is unable to find the girl he worships. She has jumped into the water as the flames drew too close to her.

Later she is found at home by the Watchdog, safe though suffering from shock. He discovers that the shock is less from exposure than from her discovery that Blinker was serious, and that he refused to condone her mode of meeting men.

Blinker is visited by his lawyer, and in their conversation, a reference to "Brickdust Row" gives Blinker the knowledge that he is the owner of that tenement—that it is his own fault which gives rise to such unconventional practices as Florence has innocently indulged in. It is too late, he thinks, now—too late to change things. His dream of love is rudely dispelled.

However, after a visit from the Watchdog, in which the gangster loyally champions Florence's character and "lays down the law" to Blinker, the latter sees Florence again, realizing his own great fault in being too quick to judge—and the reconciliation is made sweeter by his willingness to have Florence do her will

with the remodeling of the tenement, while the Watch-dog finds comfort in the smiles of Ella.

CAST OF CHARACTERS[1]

FLORENCE	A sweet, innocent girl, whose environment shapes her conduct; sympathetic type.
BLINKER	Rich, idle, careless of responsibility, and as much a victim to his own station as is Florence; slightly affected; but must not lose sympathy or create distaste.
ELLA	Snappy, shop-girl type; keen contrast to Florence, and used to build up and emphasize the fine nature of Florence.
BILL[2]	A typical slums character—gang leader; generally living by his wits, but possessed of a deep-rooted devotion to anybody who is "square" with him.
FRANK	A typical street-flirt.
LAWYER OLDPORT	A quizzical man of the "old school."

Types of the tenement district. Police, etc.

Typical crowds at Coney Island, and on boat.

[1] It will be observed that Mr. Powell uses now and then slightly different methods of type-arrangement and nomenclature from those used by Mr. Leeds. These are all unimportant variations.

[2] Bill is the interpolated character, whose purpose will be seen in script.

SCENARIO, OR CONTINUITY OF SCENES

Leader—

THUS DOES FLORENCE COAX A FEW RELUCTANT DOLLARS INTO HER WEEKLY PURSE.

1—Interior small hat-trimming shop.

The diaphragm opens to show Florence trimming a hat. She is a pathetic figure as she looks down at the hat and realizes that such finery is beyond her owning. She looks up and smiles gratefully as the owner of the place comes from paying others in view, and drops an envelope on table before her.[1]

Leader—

THE SHOP GIRL'S CONSTANT PROBLEM —MAKING ENDS MEET—HELPS FLORENCE WEAR OUT MANY A PENCIL.

2—Boarding house steps.

Florence is discovered sitting on step, figuring out her accounts with a stubby pencil on back of an old envelope. She looks disconsolately at her figures. Then as she glances up her eyes brighten and she waves a hand.[2]

[1] Nothing important happens here, but the scene is devised to gain sympathy for the girl at once.

[2] Continuing atmosphere of sympathy for Florence, and beginning story in leisurely manner in harmony with its lack of dramatic opening.

Leader—

FRIEND ELLA, OF THE SHOE-STORE CASHIER'S CAGE.

3—Street near boarding house.

Ella, whose face is piquant with recognition, waves in a snappy, "Oh! Hello, Kid" manner, and goes toward boarding house.

4—Boarding house steps, as in 2. Close-up of two girls.

Ella comes on and greets Florence in breezy way; Florence is pleased, but her manner of salutation is more quiet, though equally sincere. Ella drops on step, looks at figures, and grins. Florence indicates her depression, due to the figures that will not balance with her meager income. Ella makes a proposition, saying:

Cut-in leader—

"WHY NOT SHARE A ROOM WITH ME? WE MIGHT EACH SAVE ENOUGH TO ADD A DILL PICKLE TO OUR LUNCH."

Florence is impressed, and Ella bids her come along and see the place.[1]

5—Wider view of steps.

As Florence rises, she hesitates, and seems to be averse to putting her friend to inconvenience. Ella grins gayly, and says:

[1] Ella definitely introduced; relationship of the girls established. Note characterization in leader.

Cut-in leader—

"WHEN YOU SEE 'BRICKDUST ROW'—WHERE I LIVE—YOU WON'T THINK I'M DOING YOU ANY FAVOR."

She urges Florence to come along. Two girls leave scene.[1]

6—A street corner.

A blind man is selling pencils. Ella and Florence come on. Florence pauses, fishes coin from her purse and buys a pencil. Then, as Ella keeps right on, turning corner, Florence smiles gently and pauses again.

7—Street corner—close-up of hands.

Florence gently slips the purchased pencil back into hand of blind man, allowing her hand to rest commiseratingly on his arm an instant.

8—Wider view of street corner.

Ella turns to see what is keeping Florence, who is hurrying away to avoid the man's "Bless you, and the Saints protect you!"[2]

Leader—

"BRICKDUST ROW," WITH ITS DREARY MONOTONY AND CRUMBLING DECAY, IS A PLACE TO SIGH OVER—NOT TO LIVE IN.[3]

[1] Note planting of tenement name in leader—bringing forecast of atmosphere.

[2] Three scenes contain "human touch." Note the "close-up" as differing from "bust" used later on.

[3] O. Henry's atmosphere.

9—Long view of street with typical tenements.

Showing the dreary atmosphere of the place as Florence and Ella come along street and pause at a doorway.

10—Closer view doorway.

Emphasis of atmosphere. Ella unlatching door as Florence touches side-rail of low stoop and looks downcast, shuddering a bit. They go in.

11—Lower hall of tenement.

A worn whisk-broom hangs on wall. There is a comedy touch as Ella and Florence come in, and the latter notices the whisk-broom.

12—Bust view. Wall.

Showing whisk-broom.

13—Wider view of hall.

Ella laughs, and says:

Cut-in leader—

"THE FIRST TIME YOU START OUT FROM THIS DUST-FACTORY YOU'LL KNOW WHY THAT'S THERE!"

Florence is dubious about liking the place, but follows Ella up the rickety, dust-laden stairway.

14—Ella's tiny but neat room—window on fire-escape. Ella brings Florence in. Ella throws out hands in gesture of "Here it is—not much, I'll admit." Florence exclaims in reassuring affectation of delight and says she will take Ella's offer.

Diaphragm out.

Leader—

WE NOTE ONE BLINKER—ALEXANDER BLINKER—OWNING TENEMENTS GALORE, AND LEADING A GENERALLY USELESS LIFE BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN BROUGHT UP THAT WAY.

15—Oldport's legal office. Close-up at door.

Diaphragm in to a close view of Blinker, introducing him in a very unpleasing humor, evidently sour about something.[1]

16—Oldport's office—wider view.

Showing Oldport looking quizzically at the fuming Blinker as the latter advances, saying:

Cut-in leader—

"IF I *MUST* SIGN THOSE DISGUSTING LEASES, LET US GET IT OVER. I HAVE A GOLF TOURNAMENT ON—"

He advances and slumps pettishly into a chair by desk.

17—Close-up of Oldport.

Oldport looks around at Blinker, with an expression showing more pity than annoyance.

18—Close-up of Blinker.

Blinker makes a gesture of impatience and shifts in his chair.

[1] We are handling O. Henry's incident now, and must use his leader-material, so the next situation must be broken into various "close-up" views to prevent having too long a scene and too irksome a run of spoken matter in one scene.

19—Ella's room. A few touches indicating the refining influence of Florence.

Ella is getting ready to go out. Florence questions. Ella says, "I got an afternoon date." Then she vents her annoyance at the owner of the buildings by saying:

Cut-in-leader—

"THE DUB THAT OWNS THIS DUST-BIN IS SO MEAN THAT HE RENTS THE PARLORS—SO US GIRLS HAS GOT TO MEET OUR GENTLEMEN FRIENDS SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE—WE CAN'T ENTERTAIN IN OUR ROOMS, CAN WE?"

Florence shakes her head, and refuses an invitation to accompany Ella, who goes out.[1]

20—Oldport's office.

Blinker signing papers. Finishing, he rises. Oldport lays a restraining hand on his arm, taking another paper. Blinker shudders in distaste, as Oldport turns and says:

Cut-in leader—

"THERE IS A MATTER CONCERNING THE RENTING OF THE PARLORS IN ONE OF YOUR BUILDINGS—YOUR FATHER HAD INTENDED TO REMODEL THEM, SO—"

Blinker shrugs, and rises, protesting, imploring

[1] Contrast to Blinker; also forecasts by association of ideas the coming together of characters; hints at plot.

Oldport to let him get away. Oldport rises, and follows him to door, where he stops him.

21—Close-up door of Oldport office.

Oldport is serious, almost pleading, as Blinker wheels. Oldport says:

Cut-in leader—

"BECAUSE THE PARLORS ARE RENTED AS ROOMS, THE GIRLS, MOSTLY SHOP WORKERS, MUST DO THEIR ENTERTAINING OF MEN—ELSEWHERE—"

Blinker turns deprecatingly, and says:

Cut-in leader—

"DEAR OLD MAN—ANOTHER TIME, *PLEASE!*"

He hurries out. Oldport frowns with annoyance, then shrugs.
Diaphragm out.
Diaphragm in:[1]

22—Front of hat-shop where Florence is employed.

Frank, a typical street-flirt, is lounging, watching some girls pass; they laugh and nudge each other; then Florence comes out of shop and Frank, lifting cap, falls into step beside her. Depict innocence on Florence's part—she does not "get his drift."[2]

[1] The close of one incident and beginning of another, no leader being required.

[2] This scene-sequence develops character, with contrast of the two leads; also registers that Florence's future conduct is influenced by Ella—not voluntary.

23—Exterior of golf club.

Blinker arrives in haste, to find friends and players waiting. Emphasize his egotism and self-centeredness as they start off for the golf links.

24—Street in tenement district.

Frank is keeping up with Florence as she comes on. He takes her arm. She stops dead still. Sudden fear shows in her face. Tearing herself free, she fairly runs from the scene, Frank staring in surprise, and indicating "Holy Mackerel—stuck up little skirt!"

25—Door in Brickdust Row.

Florence comes hurrying on, looks over her shoulder to be sure she is not followed, and rushes into house.

26—Golf course.

Blinker tees up and drives. He shows satisfaction as he watches the flight of the ball, then sets off, smiling at his caddie's muttered "Some drive!"

27—Ella's room.

Florence is coming in. She is panting. Still shaking with fright and mortification, she flings herself across the bed.

28—A street corner.

Ella is parting from a "gentleman friend" and thanks him for a "swell time," then starts for home as he turns, hat lifted, and goes.

29—Golf course.

Show Blinker's egotism as he wins match amid plaudits of his friends.

30—Ella's room.

Florence still on bed as Ella comes in. "What's up, Kid?" Florence explains. Ella laughs, and tells her the lad meant no harm, then rising in denunciation of their environment, she exclaims:

Cut-in leader—

"LORD, KID! A GIRL CAN'T STICK IN THE HOUSE AND BE A DRIED PRUNE WITHOUT NO FRIENDS. IF SHE CAN'T BRING 'EM HOME—SHE HAS TO MEET 'EM WHEREVER SHE FINDS 'EM."

This is a new idea to Florence, and it impresses her, though she is dubious about it. Finally, reconciling herself, she agrees, saying:

Cut-in leader—

"YES, A GIRL HAS GOT TO HAVE SOME FUN. I GUESS IT'S NO HARM TO LET NICE FELLOWS SPEAK, AND TAKE YOU OUT SOMETIMES."

Ella assures her that it is no harm. Florence is less dubious.

Leader—

DUN, DREARY MONOTONY DRIVES

FLORENCE TO THE ONLY ENTERTAINMENT HER ENVIRONMENT PERMITS.

31—A park entrance.

Florence allows a neat chap who has been flirting to take her arm, and they go off together.

Leader—

SOMETIMES THE MOVIES—

32—Outside moving picture house. Night.

Florence is laughing as she comes on with ANOTHER nice-looking chap who takes her in to see the show.

Leader—

SOMETIMES MOONY SPOONING—

33—Park seat near lake. Moon on water for pretty view.

Florence is allowing a different fellow to sit close and hold her hand. (No inclination to get "fresh.")

Leader—

BUT ALWAYS THE SAME TACTICS, AND EACH TIME WITH A DIFFERENT CAVALIER.[1]

34—Front door, Brickdust Row. Evening.

Florence comes on, with an impatient swain, but she gives absolutely no indication that this is where she lives, and they pass off.

[1] Note the progressive series of leaders to emphasize Florence's characteristic morality.

35—Street corner.

Florence and companion come on. She says "good night" and refuses to let him go further. When he is gone around the corner she retraces her steps toward home.

Diaphragm slowly out.

Leader—

AH, THE TRIBULATIONS OF BLINKER!

36—Oldport's office.

Blinker comes in, disgusted. Oldport laughs at him somewhat sardonically as Blinker says:

Cut-in leader—

"WILL THOSE PAPERS NEVER BE DONE WITH? WELL—HURRY. I'M PACKED TO START FOR THE NORTH WOODS TONIGHT."

Oldport grins cheerfully, saying:

Cut-in leader—

"THE WORST HAS NOT BEEN TOLD YOU. THE PAPERS WILL NOT BE READY TILL MONDAY—SO YOU WILL HAVE TO AMUSE YOURSELF FOR A DAY AND A HALF—"

Blinker flings out, disgusted.

37—Ella's room.

Florence comes in, in her work-day clothes, and prepares to get out a quite new summer frock.

38—Blinker's apartment.

Blinker in, and man taking off coat, etc. Summer garb. Blinker disgusted with life. Reads paper. Man obsequious—comedy touch with proffer of numbers of varieties of cigarettes.

39—Ella's room.

Florence dressed in summer frock. Wonders what to do with herself—plans, counts money—decides and goes out.

40—Apartment.

Blinker reads "ad." in paper and suddenly says to his man:

Cut-in leader—

"SIMONDS, I'M GOING TO CONEY ISLAND."

Man bows as if he had said he was going to drown himself. Blinker bids man fetch some cool outing flannels—he acts as if he were preparing to go to be shot, but must face it. Ennui driving him.

Leader—

FOR ONCE HOI-POLLOI JOSTLES, BUSTLES AND HARASSES THE ARISTOCRATIC BLINKER.

41—Dock, gangplank.

Comedy with Blinker in a mob of "kidders" on the way to a Coney Island boat.

42—Deck chair or camp stool, on Coney Island boat. Florence is staring out over water. Turns. Sees something.

43—Deck location.

Blinker coming out of mob—catching hat, effect of tipping it.

44—Deck, wider view.

Florence affects to be freezing. Blinker notices her, and is abashed.

45—Close-up of Florence.

Florence freezing, says:

Cut-in leader—

"HOW DARE YOU LIFT YOUR HAT TO ME, SIR?"

Haughty.

46—Close-up of Blinker.

Blinker stammers:

Cut-in leader—

"I DIDN'T—"

Then starts, admiring.

47—Close-up of Florence.

Florence freezing, yet eyes twinkle.

48—Wider-angle view.

Blinker quickly corrects himself by adding:

Cut-in leader—

"I DIDN'T SEE HOW I COULD HELP IT—AFTER I *SAW* YOU."

She appears mollified. He sits.

49—Closer view, toward water.

Florence says:

Cut-in leader—

"I DON'T ALLOW GENTLEMEN TO SIT BESIDE ME TO WHOM I HAVE NOT BEEN INTRODUCED."

Comedy as Blinker rises, then sits as he sees she is joking. They begin to "get together."

50—Same scene, different angle.

He asks Florence:

Cut-in leader—

"ARE YOU GOING TO CONEY ISLAND?"

She comes back at him:

Cut-in leader—

"CAN'T YOU SEE I'M RIDING A BICYCLE UP THE WOOLWORTH TOWER?"

He is abashed, then gets her idea, and says quite attentively:

Cut-in leader—

"I'VE NEVER BEEN TO CONEY. MAYN'T WE SEE IT TOGETHER?"

She is surprised, then appraises him and temporizes.

Leader—

IN DUE COURSE ONE IS DASHED INTO THE WALKS AND AVENUES OF FAIRY-LAND GONE INTO VAUDEVILLE.

51—Steeplechase Amusement Park.

A long view to show the "atmosphere." [1] Florence and Blinker in the crowd.

52—Closer view.

Blinker and Florence. "Tough" with girl. "Tough" blows cigar smoke in Blinker's face. Florence tactfully prevents a "scrap." She can't afford to have cavalier "pinched." Off they go.

53—Some open-air amusement, as "The Whip."

Blinker and Florence on—he is disgusted. She is aflame with excitement. He looks disgustedly at the amusement, and she, divining—dejectedly—goes off with him.

Leader—

FLORENCE IS DIVINELY HAPPY—FOR IS SHE NOT WITH HER MAN—KEEPER OF THE KEYS OF FAIRYLAND?

54—Front of a show.

Florence in ecstasy. Overcomes chagrin. Goes in with disgusted but subdued Blinker—subdued by a battle royal with the mob around ticket wicket.

55—Inside the show.

As Blinker helps Florence into a seat, an Italian woman with bunch of candy-sticky kids comes along. In they pile, candying Blinker, who disgustedly hops out, with Florence, somewhat dis-

[1] The boat- and amusement-park scenes can only be lightly sketched in, as much depends on the director and his locations, so skeleton action is given.

comfited and provoked at him, following. He backs away, and she after him.

56—Closer view of the two.

Florence sizing up Blinker—delivers her opinion:

Cut-in leader—

"IF YOU EXPECT TO HAVE ANY FUN, YOU'VE GOT TO JUMP IN AND ACT AS NUTTY AS THE REST OF THEM."

Blinker is subdued, but hard to convince. Then he looks at the wistfulness of Florence's eyes, and somehow he decides he will try to enter into the spirit of the thing. She sees, is starry-eyed—drags him off, ecstasy in her face.

57—The flying horses.

Blinker about to get on, with Florence pulling him. They get on. "They're off!"

Leader—

BY THE MAGIC OF FLORENCE'S ENTHUSIASM BLINKER SUDDENLY SEES CONEY ISLAND IN ITS TRUE GUISE.

58—Flash on horse.

Florence all ecstasy.

59—Another horse—parallel.

Blinker watching Florence—sudden change to delight.

60—Horses on track in Steeplechase, running parallel.

The two horses are going away from the camera,

and as Blinker turns to smile at Florence, she smiles at him, and—
The scene interposes into—

61—A rolling open field.

Taking the place of the Steeplechase horses, we see Florence and Blinker riding at a gallop on real horses, typifying their imagined visualization.
The scene interposes back into—

62—Steeplechase horses.

Blinker laughs merrily at Florence, and both "work" as hard as they can to send the horses faster.[1]

Leader—

NO LONGER DOES BLINKER SEE A RABBLE. HE IS AMONG HIS BROTHERS, ALL SEEKING AN IDEAL.

63—Front of tawdry amusement place.

Blinker is with Florence. As they come up and listen to the "ballyhoo" man—
The scene interposes into—

64—Front of fairy castle.

Florence and Blinker as Prince and Princess.
The scene interposes back into—

[1] The technical "interpose into" and its resultant "back into" are technical devices to indicate the merging of one scene into another—and the effect here noted, as well as the following one, while very significant if well done, must not be taken as models—they were specially planned with the knowledge that a director could and would secure them adequately. See definition of "Interpose," Chapter III.

65—Front of amusement place.

Blinker and Florence rush in with crowd, all gay and hilarious.

Leader—

SO BLINKER ROLLS UP THE SHIRT-SLEEVES OF HIS MIND, AND BECOMES AN IDEALIST TOO.

66—A show (Slide).

Good comedy to get some people coming down a slide, with Blinker and Florence among them.

67—Bottom of slide.

Blinker and Florence get out, gay as can be—and as they stroll off, there is a touch of sentiment.

Leader—

THE PARTING.

68—Park entrance. Night.

Blinker and Florence. She stops him. He wants to go on with her, but she says:

Cut-in leader—

"I MUST LEAVE YOU HERE. I DON'T WANT TO SPOIL THE FAIRYLAND BY SHOWING YOU—'BRICKDUST ROW.'"

He tries to persuade her. She is firm. Another "date" for tomorrow. Off she goes. He the other way.

69—Room.

Florence in—lights up. Sits to dream of happy day.

70—Blinker's apartment. Lit up.

Blinker in to find Simonds waiting. Dismisses man, who might interrupt dream of happy day by proffer of something—comedy chase out, then Blinker back to smoke and smile.

71—Florence's room. Gas-lit.

Florence rises to remove dress, pauses to look at herself in mirror—girlish vanity.

Leader—

WHEN GANG-LEADER MEETS GANG-LEADER—

72—Front of "Brickdust Row." Night.

Bill sauntering. Pauses to light cigarette. A rival gang-leader comes on. Flash—pistols—bang—other man fires first. Bill wings him and turns.

73—Corner. Night.

"Cop" hears shooting. Listens to locate it.

74—Front of "Row." Night.

Bill hides gun in coat. Dodges into door.[1]

75—Corner. Night.

"Cop" looking around—sees—

76—Front of "Row." Night.

Man lying still.

77—Corner. Night.

"Cop" blows whistle and runs off.

[1] Here Bill is not introduced by leader, but is allowed to characterize himself in action.

78—Hall. Gas-lit.

Bill listening. Up the stairs! He may get away!

79—Front row. Night.

"Cop" and others gather about man. Several "cops" on at a run.

80—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

Bill looks in doorway. Florence at mirror, about to loosen dress. Turns. Bill comes in. He says:

Cut-in leader—

"LISTEN, SIS—A GUY CROAKED ANOTHER FELLOW—A COP THINKS I DONE IT—I DIDN'T—SO HELP ME GOD!"

He is so pathetic in his fright that she is torn with sympathy.

81—"Cops" before "Brickdust Row." Night.

"Cops" decide to look in house—go in.

82—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

Florence moves close to Bill and finds gun. He nods—says:

Cut-in leader—

"THAT'S WHY I'M SCARED—IF THEY FIND IT THEY'LL PINCH ME—" [1]

She nods. Both start, as at a sound.

83—Hall. Gas-lit.

"Cop" bounding up the stairs.

[1] It is, of course, clear to the spectators that he is not telling the truth, though not so to Florence.

84—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

Bill in terror. Florence sees the abject fear in his eyes, and the tenderness and protective sympathy of her nature are instantly roused. Dropping the gun in a table drawer, and sitting down, she motions Bill to sit opposite, and command himself. She picks up needlework, and proceeds to chat with Bill as unconcernedly as if he were a constant visitor at the place.

85—Outside the door of Ella's room. Gas light in room; dimmer light in hall.

The "cop" comes softly to door, listens, and then pushes door quietly inward.

86—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

As the police officer opens the door and looks in, Florence is quietly sewing, and Bill is leaning back, at his ease, though it is an effort for him to be unconcerned. He is smokng. The officer hesitates. Hold suspense of situation.

87—Front of "Row." Night.

Ambulance attendants busy over man. Street crowd being driven away by several policemen.

88—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

The officer moves forward, his eyes on Bill. Florence does not betray the slightest sign of dismay. She looks at the intruder as much in reproof as in surprise. Her steady look disconcerts the policeman; he shuffles, clears his throat, and explains his search, glancing toward Bill. Florence says:

Cut-in leader—

"LIVING IN THE BACK OF THE HOUSE WE DON'T HEAR MUCH—OR MY BROTHER WOULD HAVE GONE DOWN TO SEE WHAT WAS UP."

Bill takes up the lead she gives by pretending eagerness as to what happened, but the officer, after a hasty look out over the fire escape, turns and hurries from the room. Bill sighs relievedly, and looks at Florence with the same sort of light in his eyes that one sees in those of a faithful dog. This dog-like devotion is to be the developing keynote of Bill's character.

89—Roof of house. Night.

Policeman comes up on roof, looking around.

90—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

Bill is thanking Florence. She tells him that she will go down and see whether the coast is clear, and he sits down with a grateful look as she goes quietly out.[1]

91—Front of "Row." Night. From the tenement doorway.

The injured man is being made to stand. Florence comes into the scene, pausing on stoop of

[1] Compare the present scene and the one following, in respect to varying treatment of conveyed information. Here the girl merely indicates what she intends to do, and her statement of the fact is not given as dialogue-in-scene, since the next scene will make clear her unregistered words; but see how dialogue-in-scene is employed in the scene that comes next, emphasizing in the briefest way just what the player feels by what she thinks and unconsciously forms with her lips.

the "Row" and watches as the injured party feigns great pain, and gasps:

Cut-in leader—

"HONEST—HE NEAR CROAKED ME. I'M DYIN'—ALL SHOT TO PIECES. AN' THE WORST IS I DIDN'T GIT A CHANST TO SHOOT BACK AT HIM."

The ambulance men laugh and tell him to be on his way; he is more scared than hurt. Florence's face becomes tense. Her lips form the thought that flashes into her mind. "He lied—to me!" She turns and goes into house.

92—Ella's room. Gas-lit.

Bill looks up eagerly as Florence comes in. Then he stares as she goes swiftly toward the table drawer. He is quick, but not swift enough, in his rush to forestall her as she gets his revolver and "breaks" it, so that the empty cartridge and five loaded ones drop into her hand.

93—Bust of hand holding discharged cartridge.

Register the fact that it has been fired.

94—Back to 92.

Florence looks up slowly. Bill figures that she will give him up now, and gives a quick, hunted look around as Florence closes the weapon and lays it on the table, fully convinced that she has been lied to. She stands looking down at the weapon, her face brooding. Suspense. What will she do about it?

95—Roof of house. Night.

"Cop," with another. No use looking further. Separate, one going down into tenement again, other across roof toward another descent.

96—Ella's room—looking toward door. Gas-lit.

Bill in an agony of terror as he hears policeman tramping toward door. Florence looks up, and moves toward Bill, who cowers. The door starts to open. Florence pities Bill now.

97—Ella's room—from hall, through opening door. Gas-lit.

The policeman is going to be crafty; he opens door, very softly, and as he peers in, he sees—Florence slipping her arms about Bill's neck, giving him a sisterly kiss as she says:

Cut-in leader—

"GOODNIGHT, BUDDY. GIVE THE KIDDIES A KISS FROM ME."

Convinced, the officer draws away and goes from scene. Bill can be seen touching cheek Florence kissed, looking at finger as if expecting it to show the mark of contact.

98—Close-up in room, from another angle, to get Florence in profile.

Bill slowly and reverently takes Florence's hand, and with devotion in every line, says fervently:

Cut-in leader—

"KID—YOU'RE CERTAINLY WHITE!

AND YOU *ARE* 'LITTLE SIS' TO ME FROM NOW ON!"

Saying nothing more, but looking at her with devoted eyes, as she stands smiling her gentle smile, he goes to fire escape, and as he descends—
Fade slowly out.

Leader—

BILL BECOMES THE FAITHFUL WATCHDOG, ASKING ONLY A PAT, AND IS ETERNALLY VIGILANT LEST HARM COME TO THE OBJECT OF HIS DEVOTION.

Diaphragm in:

99—Park entrance.

Florence waiting. Bill is coming down path. He sees her and advances—but she meets Blinker, who is gay and delighted. They go.

100—Close-up of Bill.

No jealousy—but suspicion. Bill thinks such a man can mean no good. He starts off.

101—Wider view.

Bill seen to be shadowing Blinker and Florence.

Leader—

CONVINCED THAT "A GUY" OF BLINKER'S APPARENT AFFLUENCE CAN MEAN NO GOOD TO A "SKIRT LIKE SIS," THE WATCHDOG INVADES FAIRYLAND.

102—Steeplechase Pier.

Crowd coming off boat. Florence and Blinker. After them, shadowing, comes Bill.

Leader—

THIS TIME, THERE IS NO TIME LOST BY THE INFATUATED BLINKER, IN GETTING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THE REVELRY.

103—Any different amusement device.

Blinker with Florence—having a grand time. Show Bill aloof but watchful, evading discovery carefully.

Leader—

THE WALKING BEAM OF A CONEY ISLAND BOAT MAKES JUST ENOUGH NOISE TO ENABLE TWO TO CONVERSE COZILY ALOOF FROM THEIR NEIGHBORS.

104—By walking beam.

Wide enough to show several couples—Florence and Blinker among them; narrows down to those two, after Bill is established in background, watchful but not interfering.

105—Close-up of Blinker.

Blinker, in spell of love, says:

Cut-in leader—

"FLORENCE—I—LOVE YOU!"

Waits, breathless.

106—Close-up of Florence.

She laughs a little tremulously but recklessly and says:

Cut-in leader—

"THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY."

She begins to hum.

107—Close-up of Blinker.

He is a little impatient, and says:

Cut-in leader—

"I AM RICH. I CAN GIVE YOU MANY THINGS—"

He is interrupted.[1]

108—Close-up of Florence.

She laughs a little, and says:

Cut-in leader—

"THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY."

She is playing with him, and yet telling truth.

109—Close-up of Blinker.

He is impatient at this repetition. Says:

Cut-in leader—

"I DON'T LIKE YOU TO KEEP SAYING THAT!"

He is annoyed. She is not taking him seriously.

110—Close-up of Florence.

She looks at him—wonders—says:

[1] Sketchy, because in this case, "O. Henry" leaders are the important thing—and they give sufficient clue to the action required.

Cut-in leader—

"WHY SHOULDN'T I SAY IT? THEY DO!"

He is puzzled.

111—Close-up of Blinker.

Surprised—puzzled—angered—says:

Cut-in leader—

"WHO ARE—'THEY'?"

Jealous and anxious.

112—Close-up of Florence.

Surprised—innocent. Says:

Cut-in leader—

"WHY, THE MEN I MEET."

What is he driving at?

113—Both—in wider view.

Florence wondering. He changes expression. Growing tension. Asks her:

Cut-in leader—

"WHERE DO YOU MEET—THESE MEN?"

She looks wide-eyed—surprised—answers:

Cut-in leader—

"I MEET THEM—AS I DID YOU—"

Blinker aghast. Asks:

Cut-in leader—

"DO YOU KNOW SO MANY?"

She allows herself a laugh—says:

Cut-in leader—

"WELL I'M NOT EXACTLY A WALL FLOWER."

He turns away.

114—Close-up of Blinker.

Growing tension—it is sinking in, and finally his expression grows harder.

115—Close-up of Florence.

She wonders—finally asks:

Cut-in leader—

"WHAT'S WRONG?"

Her lips part in amazed terror.

116—New angle. Close-up of Blinker.

Swings upon her and cries:

Cut-in leader—

"EVERYTHING'S WRONG! WHY DON'T YOU SEE THESE—THESE MEN—AT YOUR HOME? IS IT NECESSARY TO MEET EVERY TOM, DICK AND HARRY —OUTSIDE?"

He is growing furious. So that is the sort she is!

117—Profile close-up of Florence.

She laughs. Her voice is brassy-hard, saying:

Cut-in leader—

"IF YOU COULD SEE 'BRICKDUST ROW' YOU WOULDN'T ASK THAT. THE FELLOW WHO OWNS IT DOESN'T GIVE US ANY PLACE TO RECEIVE—AND WE CAN'T TAKE FELLOWS TO OUR ROOM —SO—"

Shrugs.

118—Wider-angle view, with Blinker nearest camera.

Tension. Big scene as he gets over his horror and disgust and she realizes it, and rising, disillusioned—exactly as he feels that *he* is disillusioned about *her*—Sudden pause—

119—Deck, *ad lib.*

Fire! Excitement. "Where?"—"What'll we do?" [1]

120—Deck, another part.

Panic. Woman screams.

121—Walking beam.

Excited scattering of crowd. Florence turning away—Bill coming forward—Blinker listening. He grabs Florence by arm. She draws away. He compels her to go.

122—Deck.

Tension. Wild scene.

123—Walking beam.

Bill follows, crowd intervening, as Blinker takes Florence off. Bill gets after them.

124—Boat davits.

Wild scene. Officer. Sailors. Fire and smoke. Blinker with Florence. Takes her away—another boat!

125—Another boat.

Crowd more orderly. Women being helped into

[1] Sketchy, as this sort of material has to depend on boat, crowd, director, etc. Continuity only required.

boat. Blinker on with Florence. Takes her to boat.

126—Boat davits.
Sailors shot at by officer. Surge away and off.

127—Fire blazing. Sailors lose heads—dash back from fire and toward—

128—Other boat.
Fire coming. Florence by boat. Sailors rush on and fight. Get officer's gun. Surround Florence and Blinker.

129—Different angle.
Blinker fighting to save Florence.

130—Different view.
Fire coming on. Bill fighting way toward Blinker and Florence.

131—Other boat.
Blinker fighting. Florence separated from him. Bill fights way to his side. They notice one another as men with same idea—join back to back. Florence forced away. They try to get to her. Surge of sailors over-runs them.[1]

132—Deck rail.
Florence staggers on. Flames coming. Great God! What shall she do? Off she races.

133—Boat davits.
Flames leaping. Florence just in time to see boat lowered away. Too late. Driven back.

[1] Necessary departure from O. Henry, to build up Blinker's good qualities, and achieve a preparation for new finish.

134—Other boat.

Bill and Blinker together. Several sailors done for, others lower boat and go. Men peer about, but smoke too thick for them to see.

135—Rail.

Florence in terror. Sudden blast of flame. On rail. Leaps.

Diaphragm out.[1]

Diaphragm in:

136—Blinker's apartment.

Man caring for Blinker, somewhat burned. Sad and downcast. Man admits Oldport. Lawyer listens to story.

137—Hospital entry.

Bill comes out, discharged—head bandaged. He takes a card out of pocket—looks and puts back. He does not know what to do, then decides, and goes off.[2]

138—Ella's room.

Florence in bed. Ella attending. Bill knocks, is admitted.

139—Blinker's apartment.

Oldport sees Blinker is able to talk business. He assumes quizzical air, says:

[1] Purposely uncompleted to give suspense strength to hold over into next—slowing—episode.

[2] Observe how girl's fate is withheld till disposition of less important characters is shown.

Cut-in leader—

"MAYBE I CAN KEEP YOU HERE LONG ENOUGH TO TAKE UP THAT DEFERRED MATTER—"

Blinker wearily assents. Oldport begins:

Cut-in leader—

"YOUR FATHER INTENDED THAT THE PARLORS OF CERTAIN BUILDINGS SHOULD BE USED BY THE GIRL-TENANTS AS PLACES WHEREIN TO ENTERTAIN THEIR MALE CALLERS."

Blinker gives start of surprise—query—agony—cries out:

Cut-in leader—

"'BRICKDUST ROW,' FOR A MILLION!"

Oldport smiles:

Cut-in leader—

"I BELIEVE THE GIRLS HAVE SOME SUCH NICKNAME FOR IT. WHAT SHALL I DO?"

Horrible! Blinker in spasm of anguish:

Cut-in leader—

"BURN IT! RAZE IT! DO WHAT YOU LIKE—BUT I TELL YOU—IT'S TOO LATE, MAN—IT'S TOO LATE!—"

He flings away.

140—Ella's room.

Bill chatting with Ella. Seems to have good feeling for her—devouring hot-cake she has made

as he talks with Florence, who is sitting up. He takes out card, says:

Cut-in leader—

"THAT GUY YOU WAS WID—IS HE ON THE SQUARE?—HE AST ME TO CALL ON HIM—"

Florence suddenly recalls all that has happened. She turns her face away, unable to control tears of despondency.

141—Blinker's apartment.

Oldport goes. Blinker "chases" his man, sits in bad mood, sour and lovelorn by turns.

142—Ella's room.

Bill dismayed—demands what he has said. Florence sits up—controls herself. Says, gently:

Cut-in leader—

"HE—HE ISN'T GOING TO—SEE ME ANY MORE—I GUESS."

Bill is all anger—"Why?" She tells him:

Cut-in leader—

"I DON'T THINK—OUR—WAYS OF LIVING—"

She breaks down.

143—Close-up of Bill.

"The son of a brat!"—so he has chucked "Little Sis" has he, the rich piker? Well, Bill can see about that! Of course he thinks the worst of Blinker.

144—Wider-angle view.

Bill rises and tiptoes out. Florence weeping softly with Ella comforting—rough yet tender.

145—Blinker's apartment.

Man admits Bill and is dismissed. Blinker hearty—then sees Bill's anger. Rises. Big scene where Bill denounces him, saying:

Cut-in leader—

"YOU GOT TO BE SQUARE WITH THAT KID!"

Blinker misunderstands. Bill comes near to throttling him, before Blinker can gasp:

Cut-in leader—

"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND—IT WAS ONLY A DIFFERENCE OF—OPINION—"

Bill waits to find out. Blinker hesitates, then, seeing threat, begins to explain.

146—Ella's room.

Florence seems to be asleep, and Ella sneaks off for some milk or something. Florence gets up, sad and despondent. Slowly begins to dress.

147—Blinker's apartment.

Bill amazed at Blinker, who ends up:

Cut-in leader—

"IT'S A QUESTION OF ETHICS—"

Bill glowers and snaps:

Cut-in leader—

"ETHICS BE DAMNED! IT'S A QUES-

TION OF—ARE YOU GOIN' TUH BLAME HER FOR THE VERY THING YOU MADE HER DO?"

Blinker begins to consider.

148—Ella's room.

Florence dressing (suspense: Does she recall that revolver and want to add her tragedy to the dreary ones of "Brickdust Row?")

149—Blinker's apartment.

Big realization—"All my fault." Blinker goes off with Bill.

150—Ella's room.

Ella soothing Florence. Latter does not wish to live. All life is black before her.

151—Hall outside door.

Comedy relief as Bill and Blinker come on and latter draws back in a natural suspense as to his reception and Bill tells him to "beat it on in!" Blinker knocks, and goes in. Bill pauses.

152—Ella's room.

Florence looks up. Ella surprised. Blinker pauses. Ella seems to be attracted by something.

153—Crack of open door.

Bill is making violent gestures to get Ella out.

154—Ella's room.

Ella catches Bill's idea, and moves unostentatiously out. Then Blinker strides to Florence. He says:

Cut-in leader—

"IT'S ALL WRONG. I'VE COME TO SQUARE IT."

Florence is reserved, chilly, as she says:

Cut-in leader—

"YOU MEAN—ABOUT THE PARLORS?"

Blinker is beside her, and catching her hands he cries:

Cut-in leader—

"I MEAN—ABOUT YOU!—AND ME!"

In spite of herself, Florence is forced to lift her eyes, and as she reads the look in his own she is compelled to realize that the air is cleared at last and that the happiness that seemed dead is again alive—palpitant happiness that draws her into his ready arms.

155—Hall outside Ella's room.

Bill "fixes it up" with Ella to "travel double." She wants to rush in and tell her chum, but Bill stays her: "Nix—let 'em do some clinchin' first!"

156—Ella's room.

Florence and Blinker embracing.

Circle diaphragm closes to blackness.[1]

[1] This is the script before it reached production. If you see the picture, you will no doubt observe directorial alterations that came up during production. In that case you will have valuable experience in seeing the difference between the original—the script-writer's conception—and the directorial interpretation.

CHAPTER XXI

MARKETING THE PHOTOPLAY SCRIPT

Writing the photoplay is essentially an art; marketing the photoplay script is a business; and the sooner the writer adopts intelligent, up-to-date business methods in offering his stories, the sooner he is likely to find the checks coming in. It is not enough merely to send out your script; it must be sent to that editor who is in the market for the kind of script you have written. As one editor has said, "Don't send a Biblical photoplay to a firm that makes a specialty of Indian and cowboy subjects."

Your first care, then, should be to have as complete a knowledge as possible of what every company is doing, what kinds of stories they need at the time, where their field-companies are working, and, above all, what kinds of scripts certain companies positively do *not* want at *any* time. For of course, there are companies with definitely fixed policies, besides concerns that announce from time to time that they are unable to use stories of this or that sort.

The most important aids to a thorough knowledge of the photoplay market are the different moving-picture trade-journals and the magazines published exclusively for writers.[1] By studying them you will equip your-

[1] See Chapter XIV.

self with a first-hand knowledge of what the different studio editors need, and so be on the right road. Don't take a gambler's chance by sending out your scripts without knowing precisely what is a good prospect.

In almost every one of the foregoing chapters we have raised points that bear upon the selling of your story as well as affect the particular part of the script then being discussed. To repeat one instance, you were advised not only to satisfy yourself that a company is in the market for society stories, but to look into the nature of the stock-company producing their plays. If the company you select is one that features a woman in most of its picture-stories, and yours is a photoplay with a strong male lead, you would be unwise to submit it there. True, it might be accepted and one of the studio writers commissioned to rewrite it in order to give the "fat" part to the leading woman, but your check would be proportionately smaller to compensate for the rewriting—you would, in fact, be paid little more than if you had sold the bare idea.

In submitting your script to a given company, do not address it to individuals, unless there is a very good reason for so doing—and there seldom is. Address your letter either to the "Editor, Blank Film Company," or to the "Manuscript Department." Most useless of all is the practice of sending to some person who is known to be associated with a certain company, without knowing just what his position is.

Once the photoplaywright has begun to sell his

scripts, he will usually prefer to do his own marketing. If, he argues, he is able to write salable photoplays, why should he share his checks with authors' agents or photoplay clearing houses? Yet many writers find an agency to be advantageous. But you had better take the advice of an experienced friend before committing your work to an intermediary—not all are capable and not all are honest.

One thing the writer should remember: *Send a script to only one firm at a time.* There is one company at least, and there may be more, which announces that no carbon copies of scripts will be considered. The implication, of course, is that they are afraid to pass on carbon copies for fear that at the time they are looking over a script it may have been already purchased by some other company. If you *do* send out a carbon copy of your script, make it plain to the editor in your accompanying letter that the original script has gone astray or been destroyed, and you are sending the carbon in its place for that reason. But why send a carbon script at all? If you think enough of your work to want to see it well-dressed, make a clean, fresh copy and take no risks.

It is literally true that many an author has spoiled his chances of ever selling to certain companies because he sold a story to a second company before making certain that it had been rejected by the first to which it was sent. Imagine the complication of receiving a check from B shortly after the author has had word that A has purchased the same story!

A manuscript should *never* be rolled—it irritates a

busy editor to have to straighten out a persistently curling package of manuscript.

The sheets should not be permanently fastened together. It is simple diplomacy to make the reading of your script an agreeable task instead of an annoyance.

Do not fold an 8½ x 11-inch sheet of paper more than twice. Fold it but once, or else make two even folds and the script will be in proper form to fit the legal-sized envelope. Heavy manilla envelopes are the strongest, but we have never had cause to complain of the white, stamped envelopes to be had at any post-office. If you choose to use these, ask for sizes 8 and 9. Your script, folded twice, will fit snugly into the size 8, which is to be the self-addressed return envelope. Do *not* put your MS. in the return envelope. In enclosing the smaller envelope, turn it with the open side down, so as to avoid having the flap cut when the outer envelope is opened with a paper knife.

Attach the full amount of postage to *both* envelopes; never enclose loose stamps—and *never* forget to stamp the inner envelope if you wish to get your manuscript back in case of rejection. At this writing (February, 1919), a three-cent stamp will bring it back to you, but you will have to pay whatever else is due before receiving the letter; and if the story sells, and you receive nothing but the check, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have not been stingily economical in sending it out.

See that your name and address are on the upper left-hand corner of the going envelope; be sure, too, that the return envelope is properly self-addressed.

We should not advise the young writer to put the price demanded for his script in the upper right-hand corner of the first sheet, though this is where it should go if he does wish to stipulate the amount for which he will sell it. It is very much better simply to write: "Submitted at usual rates." Even after you have sold to a given company, it is better, as a rule, to leave the matter of payment to the editor. You may be sure that he will pay you just as much as your story is worth, being governed only by the price-limit fixed by the manufacturer. Today, almost every manufacturer realizes that the day of getting "something for nothing" is past. In other words, he realizes that the script—the story—is the very keystone of the photoplay arch, and if the story is purchased from a free-lance writer, he must be prepared to pay a fair price for it.

It is impossible, in a work of this kind, to say what certain companies are in the habit of paying, but it may roughly be said that the minimum price *per reel* today is $50. Most of the larger producing companies are glad to pay a minimum of $100 per reel for satisfactory material, and $1,000 for a five-reel script—or even for a five-reel story in synopsis form, if that is the company's policy—is regularly paid by those who are entitled to be called "the leading producers." Most companies have a fixed, uniform price-scale; and it would be silly for any one to say that you will be paid a certain amount for your story "if it suits them." We have in mind a certain large company that is in the habit of paying $1,000 for all the five-reel synopses

it purchases. If your story is not what this company wants, of course it will not be purchased at all. If your story does suit them, you may be certain of receiving a check for $1,000 at least—and we say "at least" because they have been known to pay still higher prices if the story is really unusual and hence especially valuable to them. This same company—as do nearly all concerns—frequently pays a price greatly exceeding $1,000 for the work of authors with "big names," because, of course, the value of the big name is not to be denied.

Experience alone will teach you which companies pay the best prices; after you have sold several scripts, and have become acquainted with the price-scale of different studios, you will, if the play suits that particular market, naturally offer your material first to the company that has paid you best. But just as soon as a script comes back from one company—so long as you feel certain that it is not in your power to improve it before letting it go out again—send it out to another, and then to another, until it is either accepted or so worn or soiled that it is politic to recopy it. And don't wait too long to do this simple act of justice to your brain-child. Whatever you do, don't stop with three or four rejections—keep at it until you are *sure* the market is exhausted. But be certain to review your script for possible improvements each time it comes back to you.

Keep up your output. Do not write one story, send it out, and then wait patiently for its return, or for the editor's check. Plan a new story, write it, and

send it out. Then plan another and follow the same course. Photoplay marketing is a business, and a business man is usually "on the job" six days a week.

It is best not to write a letter to the editor, to accompany your script, unless there is a very special reason for so doing. Nor should the writer rush a letter of inquiry off in case he does not hear from the editor within a week or two after submitting his story. Delay may be a hopeful sign. If you hear nothing in two months it is time enough to write—briefly and courteously. Nearly all companies, however, will report well within that period.

It is utterly impossible in a work of this nature to include a list of the requirements of every photoplay editor. The policy of the manufacturers is always subject to change. Their requirements are governed by the number of scripts of each kind they have on hand, the disposal of their field-companies, the season of the year, the ability of their directors to turn out the various kinds of pictures, and also by individual preferences.

The way to keep posted on the current needs of the various companies is to study on the screen the pictures of the different producing firms; to read in the trade-journals the synopses of all the releases that you do not have the opportunity of witnessing; and to keep in touch with the announcements made by the manufacturers themselves in the weekly and monthly journals mentioned in Chapter XIV.

"Where and How to Sell Manuscripts," by William B. McCourtie, issued by the publishers of this book

($2.50), contains a frequently revised list of over 5,000 markets for literary material of all sorts, including photoplays.

Keep a record of every script you send out. Here is one simple form for a manuscript book or card index:

Title	Sent to	Returned from	Date	Sold to	Date	Price

Do not let the printed rejection slip humiliate you. Really great writers get them, constantly. This statement is equally true of both fiction and photoplay writing. It would take too much time and money for an editorial staff to write personal letters to all who offer unsolicited manuscript.

Never write petulant or sarcastic letters when your offerings are rejected. You may need the good-will of that editor some day. Although personal pique seldom actuates him, he may be frail enough to be annoyed when his well-meant efforts are assailed.

In conclusion, we urge the writer to remember the words of Dr. Johnson:

"All the performances of human art at which we look with praise or wonder are instances of the resistless force of perseverance; it is by this that the quarry becomes a pyramid, and that distant countries are united with canals."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Some Books Dealing with Plot in Fiction

1. Moulton, Richard G.; *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist,* Oxford Press, New York, 1885.
2. Price, William T.; *Technique of the Drama,* Brentano, New York, 1892.
3. Barrett, Charles Raymond; *Short Story Writing,* Baker & Taylor, New York, 1900.
4. Perry, Bliss; *A Study of Prose Fiction,* Houghton, Mifflin, Boston, 1902.
5. Albright, Evelyn May; *The Short-Story,* Macmillan, New York, 1907.
6. Hamilton, Clayton; *Materials and Methods of Fiction,* Baker & Taylor, New York, 1908.
7. Esenwein, J. Berg; *Writing the Short-Story,* Home Correspondence School, Springfield, Mass., 1909 and 1918.
8. Phillips, Henry Albert; *The Plot of the Short-Story.* Out of print. See any large library.
9. Pitkin, Walter B.; *The Art and the Business of Story Writing,* Macmillan, 1912.
10. Esenwein, J. Berg, and Chambers, Mary B.; *The Art of Story Writing,* Home Correspondence School, 1913.
11. Wells, Carolyn; *The Technique of the Mystery Story,* Home Correspondence School, 1913.

12. NEAL, ROBERT WILSON; *Short Stories in the Making,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1914.
13. NOTESTEIN, LUCY LILIAN, and DUNN, WALDO HILARY; *The Modern Short-Story,* Barnes, New York, 1914.
14. PHILLIPS, HENRY ALBERT; *Universal Plot Catalogue,* Stanhope-Dodge, 1915.
15. PAIN, BARRY; *The Short Story,* Doran, New York, 1916.
16. BAKER, HARRY T.; *The Contemporary Short Story,* Heath, Boston, 1916.
17. WILLIAMS, BLANCHE COLTON; *A Handbook on Story Writing,* Dodd, Mead, New York, 1917.

APPENDIX B

ESPECIALLY HELPFUL BOOKS ON PHOTOPLAY WRITING

1. SARGENT, EPES WINTHROP; *The Technique of the Photoplay,* Moving Picture World, New York, 1913. Third edition, 1917.
2. PHILLIPS, HENRY ALBERT; *The Photodrama,* Stanhope-Dodge Co., Larchmont, N. Y., 1914.
3. POWELL, A. VAN BUREN; *The Photoplay Synopsis,* Home Correspondence School, Springfield, Mass., 1919.

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Names of authors and companies are printed in capitals; titles, and names of magazines, are printed in italics; and other topics are set in plain, or "Roman" type.

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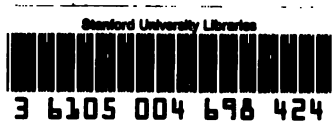

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